

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – SERVICES**

**10 July 2024**

**(EXTRACT FROM DRAFT MINUTES)**

**OSS7 DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW CORPORATE STRATEGY (2024-2034)**

The Lead Councillor for Community and Organisational Development introduced the item. She indicated that the draft Corporate Strategy being reviewed was the result of months of work by the Executive and officers. The Lead Councillor for Community and Organisational Development advised the meeting that the Strategy was the key strategic document for the Council, as it set out the Council's priorities for the next 10 years and provided a focus for all the Council's work.

The Lead Councillor for Community and Organisational Development gave an overview of the Strategy's five key priorities: a more sustainable Borough, a more prosperous Borough, a more inclusive Borough, decent and affordable homes, and a resilient and well-managed Council. The Committee was informed that the version of the Strategy circulated to members for comment was in draft form, with elements such as the design and photography to be finalised.

The Assistant Director, Strategy and Corporate Services, advised the meeting that beginning next spring an annual delivery plan for the Corporate Strategy would be published. He indicated that this plan would tie into the Council's Budget setting processes and link to actions over the coming year. In addition, he stated that service delivery plans and staff objectives and annual appraisals would correlate to the annual delivery plan. The meeting was informed that implementation of this plan would be tracked at a corporate level, including through quarterly performance reports to overview and scrutiny.

During the ensuing discussion, Councillors raised a number of queries and made suggestions to improve the draft Strategy:

- A member of the Committee queried the cover picture used on the draft Strategy document, particularly the prominence of the ring road. In addition to using images such as the Guildhall clock or Guildford Castle, the value of images to highlight the planned opening-up of the River Wey was suggested. Other Councillors suggested the use of photographs of Stoke Park, the Lido, the market, the river around Millmead, and Pewley Hill.

- Members asked how the Strategy's progress would be measured and advocated including specific targets within it, for example, the number of houses that would be built over the next 10 years. In response, the Assistant Director, Strategy and Corporate Services, stated that it was not the intention to include such details within the Strategy document, and that such targets would feature within the delivery plan and the service planning process that he had outlined earlier in the meeting.
- With reference to equality, diversity and inclusion commitments and imagery, members of the Committee noted the need to both reference and include a wider range of groups and individuals within the Strategy document. The current lack within the document of images of people with disabilities or from different ethnic groups was pointed out.
- Members asked how much consultation had informed the preparation of the Strategy. In reply, the Assistant Director, Strategy and Corporate Services, indicated that there were commitments within the Strategy that the delivery of it would be done in partnership and in consultation with a wide variety of stakeholders, including Council committees and the public and partners. He suggested that some local authorities consulted prior to putting a Corporate Strategy in place, while others – like Guildford – focused on consulting on delivery of their Strategy. The Assistant Director, Strategy and Corporate Services, advised that the approach within the proposed Strategy was committed to engagement between the Council and the communities it served.
- With reference to comments within the draft Strategy document, the Assistant Director, Strategy and Corporate Services, suggested that the publication of the Strategy would be an opportunity to remind members of the public how to get involved in the Council's decision making processes.
- A member of the Committee welcomed the five priorities of the Strategy and the consistency of language throughout the draft document.
- The value in presenting information within the Strategy in pie charts, rather than as figures, was suggested. The need to replace the icon for veterans was agreed. Similarly, there was a consensus around the likely value in better explaining the CO2 figures in the About our Borough section of the draft Strategy.

- The Lead Councillor for Community and Organisational Development informed the meeting that she had asked for the photographs within the Strategy document to reflect all the Borough, rather than just Guildford town. Members of the Committee noted the need for the Strategy to address rural areas and for the Strategy document to perhaps reflect that not all areas of the borough were affluent or picturesque.
- The Lead Councillor for Community and Organisational Development indicated that the Strategy would be refreshed and revised over its ten year period.
- In response to questions from a Councillor, the Assistant Director, Strategy and Corporate Services, indicated that it was commonplace to have a mixture of continuity and new direction within a Corporate Strategy for a local authority. He advised that the review of strategies and plans required by the Corporate Improvement Plan would be informed by the direction of travel set out within the new Corporate Strategy. The Assistant Director, Strategy and Corporate Services, confirmed that the Strategy was a framework that would be refreshed during its ten year period, possibly because of other strategies and plans being developed.
- The Lead Councillor for Environment and Climate Change suggested that policy and direction in local government was a top-down process, not bottom up.
- Members discussed the credibility and importance of keeping the 2030 carbon neutral Council target within the Strategy and whether the importance of measures to protect mature and developed trees in the Borough should be stated.
- The Chair suggested that the Strategy acknowledge the importance of the Council working with water companies, central government, and other organisations, to ensure clean water for residents.
- A member of the Committee suggested a more explicit mention of the work with Surrey County Council on the nature recovery strategy warranted inclusion in the Strategy.

- Members of the Committee suggested the evening and night time economy should be included in the Strategy and championed the merits of the Purple Flag scheme for the Borough. The Lead Councillor for Community and Organisational Development undertook to take the suggestion to take part in the Purple Flag scheme back to the Executive.
- The life expectancy gap between the richest and poorest areas in the Borough was highlighted as an issue that should be central to the Council. In response, the Lead Councillor for Community and Organisational Development advised that the Strategy did discuss physical and mental well-being, health, and leisure and green spaces, but undertook to re-examine the concern raised. With reference to the Strategy, the Leader of the Council and Lead Councillor for Housing indicated that a new Health and Wellbeing Partnership Board would positively contribute to the wider determinants of health and issues such as life expectancy.
- A member of the Committee advocated including an explicit pledge within the Strategy to employ local people and support apprenticeships.
- A member of the Committee noted the omission from the Strategy of specific mention of older people and advised the meeting of the proportion of people in the Borough aged over 65 years and between 50 and 64 years. In addition, he suggested the photographs within the Strategy document could include more older people. In response, the Assistant Director, Strategy and Corporate Services, advised that most commitments set out within the Strategy applied across age groups. The Lead Councillor for Community and Organisational Development agreed the photographs within the Strategy document would be reviewed to ensure they better reflected the diverseness of the Borough.
- In response to questions, the meeting was advised of the Decent Homes Standard. In reply to a suggestion that the Strategy commit the Council to be a good landlord the Lead Councillor for Community and Organisational Development informed the meeting that the draft Strategy stated that the Council would be a 'responsive landlord' and that tenant satisfaction was proposed as a key progress measure.
- The Committee queried the importance and future direction of the collaboration with Waverley Borough Council and were reminded by the

Assistant Director, Strategy and Corporate Services, that the vision statement and objectives of the collaboration had been agreed in November 2023. He advised that meeting that the business case for the collaboration was to be revisited, with independent input, and the achievements and potential of the collaboration initiative ascertained.

- Councillors discussed the contribution, role, and variety of parish councils within the Borough.

The Chair confirmed that the notes of the Committee's discussion would be provided to the Executive for its consideration of the Corporate Strategy on 15 July.

## **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – RESOURCES**

**11 July 2024**

### **(EXTRACT FROM DRAFT MINUTES)**

#### **OSR9 DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW CORPORATE STRATEGY (2024-2034)**

The Lead Councillor for Community and Organisational Development introduced the item. She indicated that the draft Corporate Strategy was the result of several months of work by the Executive and officers. The Lead Councillor for Community and Organisational Development advised the meeting that the Strategy was the key strategic document for the Council and set out the Council's priorities for the next 10 years and provided a focus for all the Council's work. She indicated that central to the new Strategy was the vision 'To make Guildford borough a thriving place to live, work and do business.'

The Lead Councillor for Community and Organisational Development gave an overview of the Strategy's five key priorities: a more sustainable Borough, a more prosperous Borough, a more inclusive Borough, decent and affordable homes, and a resilient and well-managed Council. The Committee was informed that the version of the Strategy circulated to the Committee for comment was in draft form, with elements such as the design and photography to be finalised. The Lead Councillor for Community and Organisational Development confirmed that feedback from both of the Council's overview and scrutiny committees would be considered by the Executive on 15 July and the adoption of the Strategy would be determined by full Council on 23 July.

The Chief Executive Officer thanked the officers who had helped prepare the draft Corporate Strategy. He advised the Committee of the planned delivery of the Strategy and its link to the Council's budget setting process, together with how the Strategy would inform individual service delivery and form the basis for individual staff objectives and annual appraisals.

The Chief Executive Officer advised that implementation of the delivery plan would be tracked at the corporate level through the quarterly Corporate Performance Report, which both overview and scrutiny committees would review. He stated that the Council's suite of key performance indicators was being refreshed ahead of the Quarter One report to ensure alignment with the priorities set out in the draft Strategy.

The Chief Executive Officer stated that a Guildford-based graphic design company was undertaking the design of the Strategy document.

During the ensuing discussion, Councillors raised a number of queries and made suggestions to improve the draft Strategy:

- In response to a question on possible extra staffing capacity for the Council's organisational development service, the Chief Executive Officer advised the Committee that this would be unknown until the budget setting process and the allocation of resources had occurred.
- A member of the Committee asked for details of the communications and consultations planned to engage with local community groups. The Chief Executive Officer referred to the importance of residents being able to engage with the Council and stated that the process of engagement was central to the development of the corporate delivery plan. He indicated that efforts would be made to reach seldom heard groups as part of future consultations.
- A member of the Committee indicated that the evidence and analysis behind the draft Strategy was not provided in the report submitted to the Committee and there was a consequent difficulty for the Committee in evaluating the proposed Strategy. In addition, he suggested that the draft Strategy should better recognise and acknowledge the problems and challenges facing the Borough. The Councillor for Community and Organisational Development indicated that the Executive knew of the challenges facing the Borough. She stated that the detailed delivery plan, that would be developed following adoption of the Strategy, would address how these challenges would be met. In response, the member of the Committee suggested that the options for dealing with the challenges confronting the Borough might usefully have been discussed with the Committee members.
- The Chief Executive Officer informed the meeting that the five priorities within the draft Strategy were the result of an analysis of the problems facing the Borough. He stated that the need to address certain challenges was implicit in the way in which the priorities within the draft Strategy were set out. The Chief Executive Officer advised that further analysis would inform the decisions to achieve the aims of the Strategy. A member of the Committee suggested the draft Corporate Strategy was a vision document more than a strategy.

- The Chair suggested the need for further information and details in order to assess the Council's progress in delivering its Corporate Strategy. He proposed that each recommendation or action stated in the annual corporate delivery plan should be accompanied by a base starting point, details of how and what would be done to carry out the proposed action, the cost and source of funding, and the timeframes until completion. The Lead Councillor for Community and Organisational Development informed the meeting that the content and format of the delivery plan had yet to be determined, but the ability to assess progress was recognised as essential and the Chair's comments would be taken into consideration by the Executive.
- In reply to a question, the Chief Executive Officer advocated the value in proposing a long-term Corporate Strategy; he indicated that decisions to deliver a ten-year strategy would be taken from a different viewpoint than decisions framed within a shorter-term strategy.
- The Chief Executive Officer advised the meeting that future allocations of resources and budget setting should be judged against the Council's strategic objectives and priorities. He confirmed the role of the Council's overview and scrutiny function, residents, and businesses in the scrutiny of the annual delivery plan for the Corporate Strategy.
- In response to a concern raised about air quality monitoring at sensitive sites such as schools and hospitals, the Corporate Strategy and Performance Manager advised that monitoring took place at such locations. He confirmed that there were three Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) in the Borough: Guildford town centre, The Street Shalford, and The Street Compton.
- In response to a query from a Committee member, the Policy Officer, Strategy and Performance, confirmed that Sandfield Primary School was not within the Guildford town centre AQMA.
- With reference to the priority of becoming a more prosperous Borough, a member of the Committee noted that Guildford Borough was a major centre for innovation, notably through Surrey Research Park, and suggested this might be reflected in the Strategy. In reply, the Lead Councillor for Community and Organisational Development thanked the Councillor for his suggestion.



- A Committee member noted the value in taking a long-term, strategic view of the options for managing the Council's housing stock.
- In response to a question, the Lead Councillor for Community and Organisational Development advised that the review of IT strategy referenced within the draft Strategy included the Council's website.
- A member of the Committee noted the scale and importance of the Council's collaboration with Waverley Borough Council and observed that consideration of the end purpose for the initiative was required. The Chief Executive Officer advised that a revisited cost-benefit analysis of the collaboration was being undertaken for publication by the end of the summer.

RESOLVED: (I) That the work undertaken so far in developing the new Corporate Strategy be noted.

(II) That the draft minutes of the Committee meeting be provided to the Executive before it considers whether to recommend the adoption of the new Corporate Strategy to full Council on 23 July 2024.