

Meeting: Cabinet
Date: 20 November 2023
Classification: Part 1
Key Decision: No
Title of Report: **Southend-on-Sea City Council
Refreshed Corporate Plan 2023-2027**

Executive Director: Claire Shuter (Strategy and Change)
Report Author: Suzanne Newman, Head of Corporate Strategy
Executive Councillor: Councillor Cox, Leader of the Council

1. Executive Summary

1.1. Our Corporate Plan is the principal corporate strategy of Southend-on-Sea City Council. It recognises our primary role in delivering good quality local government services in the city. It sets out our areas of focus for the city in three overarching priorities and underpins them with a fourth priority for our organisation. It details the outcomes we wish to achieve, the actions we will take to deliver them and how we will resource the necessary activity. It covers the full range of the council's responsibilities and priorities and is an important tool to help focus our effort and resources on the right things. This is even more important in the context of reducing budgets and rapid change.

- The 'drivers' – why these things are important for Southend
- Our prioritised aims for the Council
- The outcomes and difference delivering on the aims will make
- The key things we are going to do to deliver the priority
- How we are going to measure success

1.2. Our four overarching priorities are:

- A growing city with a strong and prosperous community
- A safe city with a good quality of life for all
- A clean city with a resilient environment
- A transforming council delivering efficient, cost-effective services

- 1.3. Under each priority there are several outcomes we want to achieve and more detail about what we will do. In October 2022 the Local Government Association was invited to undertake a Corporate Peer Challenge. In the feedback, the Peer Team reflected that 'we have done really well to set priorities (in reference to the 2022 Corporate Plan) but we need to prioritise our priorities'. The refresh of the Corporate Plan seeks to address this.

2. Recommendations

Cabinet:

- 2.1. Recommends approval of the draft Corporate Plan 2023-27 (**Appendix 1**) to Council with responsibility for any final changes prior to publication delegated to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council.

3. Background

- 3.1. In 2022 the Council reintroduced a Corporate Plan following a period between 2018 and 2022 where the council operated without one, instead directed by the Southend 2050 Ambition, with the Council's contributions articulated through the Southend 2050 themes and Roadmap. This operating model enabled the vision for Southend to be clearly articulated. However, Southend 2050 focused on Southend as a place and community, not setting out how the council needs to operate and prioritise in order to deliver and contribute to the Ambition.
- 3.2. The intention of the Corporate Plan is to focus on the delivery of the council's priorities and objectives. It is shaped by a number of influences which include: the administrations priorities; our statutory responsibilities; responses to inspections and audits, including feedback from the Local Government Association Peer visit; and national policy change.
- 3.3. Our Corporate Plan provides a helpful narrative and sets the direction for the work we're doing, providing a place to knit all of the council's work together in a way that makes sense to everyone. It's aims are to:
 - Provide clarity and direction in a 4-year business plan
 - Ensure efficient use of resources
 - Provide a way of measuring success
 - Support effective decision making
 - Coordinate activities
 - Motivate and guide staff

4. Reasons for Decisions

- 4.1. To ensure the Council has a robust strategic plan which clearly articulates the priorities for the organisation enabling efficient use of resources.

5. Other Options

- 5.1. There is no requirement to have a Corporate Plan, but it is best practice and provides a helpful narrative to set the direction for the work.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1. Resourcing the council's strategic priorities as set out in the Corporate Plan will require tough choices and careful consideration over the next four years. Decisions will be underpinned by our Financial Sustainability Strategy and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy, helping to target resources and effectively consider and manage a range of financial impacts.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1. Being the principal corporate strategy, the Corporate Plan falls within the remit of the Council to approve.
- 7.2. Article 4 of the Constitution sets out those matters which are reserved to the Council. This states that Southend 2050, the former principal corporate strategy, is reserved to Council for approval. As this Corporate Plan stands in the place of the Southend 2050 strategy, it is for the Cabinet to recommend its approval to Council.

8. Policy Context

- 8.1. The Corporate Plan is shaped by a number of influences which include: the administrations priorities; our statutory responsibilities; responses to inspections and audits, including feedback from the Local Government Association Peer visit; and national policy change.

9. Carbon Impact

- 9.1. The council is committed to becoming net zero carbon by 2030 to help meet the climate emergency, with this being a leading priority for the council. Priority actions include: preventing waste, re-use and increase recycling; developing an active and sustainable travel network; enhance, promote and protect our natural environment; and undertake flood and coastal erosion risk management.

10. Equalities

- 10.1. The council's Equality Objectives were updated in 2022 with a new approach to support our desire to be more effective and accountable on equality, diversity and inclusion matters. The approach includes an overarching Equalities Statement that sets a vision for the type of council we want to be. We will achieve the vision through a number of objectives, which cover four key topics: employees, access to services, partnership working and community cohesion. Under each topic we have identified a commitment which describes a specific and measurable piece of work, which when completed will help us on our journey to achieving our stated equalities vision. We will report on our progress against the commitments in future corporate plans.

11. Consultation

- 11.1. The Corporate Plan has been informed by findings from the residents' perception survey undertaken in 2021 in addition to specific, consultation, engagement and co-production for associated strategies and plans.

12. Background documents

- 12.1. Financial Sustainability Strategy
12.2. Medium Term Financial Strategy

13. Appendices

- 13.1. **Appendix 1**: Draft Corporate Plan 2023-2027

14. Report Authorisation

| This report has been approved for publication by: | | |
|--|----------------|--------------|
| | Name: | Date: |
| S151 Officer | J Chesterton | 9/11/23 |
| Monitoring Officer | K Sawyer | 9/11/23 |
| Executive Director(s) | C Shuter | 24/10/23 |
| Relevant Cabinet Member(s) | Councillor Cox | 24/10/23 |