

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 15 January 2015

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director Policy and Resources

PORTFOLIO: Leader's

SUBJECT: Draft Corporate Plan 2015-2018

WARDS: All

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To seek Members' views on the proposed design and content of the new Corporate Plan.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the Board recommends to the Council that

- 1) the attached draft Corporate Plan 2015-2018 be approved; and**
- 2) the production of an annual report each year based on the Corporate Plan, highlighting the Council's key achievements and issues, be supported.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 The Corporate Plan sets out the Council's vision and values as well as its contribution to the delivery of the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) 2011-26. It concentrates on the priorities and aspirations of the Council over a three year period to help improve the quality of life for people in Halton and guide the development of the more detailed strategy and actions to be undertaken by the Council. This is also reflected within the Council's Policy and Performance Board structure.

3.2 The current Corporate Plan runs until April 2016 and therefore the time is right to consider the development of a new and up to date plan. It is proposed that a new approach to the Corporate Plan be taken this time around, with the new plan being a clear and simple reference document setting out the Council's overall aims, vision and values but with operational detail and performance issues contained within the Directorate Business Plans and Performance Framework. This approach will improve clarity of the purpose of the plan, reduce duplication with other strategic documents and communicate at a glance the core purpose and values of the organisation.

3.3 The draft Corporate Plan attached is based around five strategic themes that contribute to the Borough's five strategic priorities:

- A Healthy Halton
- Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton
- A Safer Halton
- Halton's Children and Young People
- Environment and Regeneration in Halton.

3.4 There is also an additional Council theme incorporated: Corporate Effectiveness and Business Efficiency which underpins and supports the achievement of the five strategic themes.

4.0 POLICY OPTIONS

4.1 The previous Corporate Plan contained a high volume of priorities, themes and areas of focus (26 areas of focus, 31 key objectives and 210 areas of future planned activity in total) which meant a potential lack of clarity and focus on what is critical to the organisation. Inevitably it also heightened the risk of duplication of other documents, or as documents are updated, the possibility of contradictory information with other strategies and plans. The new plan seeks to reduce these areas down to a realistic number.

4.2 The process has therefore been undertaken with a focus on reducing the number of priorities and actions in the Corporate Plan. The Council's LGA Peer Review in 2013 also recommended that the Council needs to focus resources on a smaller number of key areas. This process is being recommended to support that goal.

4.3 It is proposed that the revised Corporate Plan be a highly visual document, simple to understand at a glance and clearly communicating the ambitions, vision and values of the Council

4.4 The plan will retain the commitment to Halton's agreed strategic priorities would reframe these as our "Strategic Themes" as it using the term "priority" to encompass everything we do is potentially misleading and confusing. Strategic Themes, (with their own priorities within them), provides a more accurate and clear reflection of the work of the authority. There is also an additional Council specific theme incorporated of Corporate Effectiveness and Business Efficiency as this underpins and supports the achievement of the five strategic themes.

- 4.5 The Council has a robust annual Directorate Business planning process which sets out the operational detail of the work we do. This is monitored through the Performance Management Framework. It is therefore proposed that this level of detail does not also need to be contained within the Corporate Plan, leaving it free to focus on the key issues and themes. Taking this detail out of the Corporate Plan also reduces the potential for duplication or for an inevitable mismatch between information in the Corporate Plan (produced every three – five years) and the annual business plans and should ensure that the Corporate Plan remains relevant and strategic.
- 4.6 This draft plan identifies a new set of corporate values for the council called ‘The Halton Way’. These are proposed to include co-operative working, managing demand, locality and business approaches. These values set out the operating culture of the Council and are based on both current ways of working, such as ensuring equality of opportunity and implementing evidence based policy, and the ways in which the Council will need to increasingly operate in the future to respond to future challenges and opportunities, such as managing demand and building more resilient communities.
- 4.7 It is proposed that the plan, when published on the Halton Borough Council website, will include a foreword for the Leader introducing the new style of document and highlighting some key aims and projects. The Directorate Business Plans (as the delivery documents of the Corporate Plan) will be published underneath, alongside several of the key strategies and plans that form the evidence base for the plan (for example Sustainable Community Strategy, Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Children and Young People’s Plan etc.) to provide a context for the document. It is also proposed that copies of the new Corporate Plan be produced as leaflet/ A3 poster style to raise awareness of the strategic themes and principles the Council is working towards.
- 4.8 The Corporate Plan could potentially be accompanied by a published Annual Report, highlighting the Council’s progress against the Corporate Plan on an annual basis.

5.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 This approach supports both the Halton Strategic Partnership through the adoption of the key themes of the Sustainable Community Strategy as well as supporting the current PPB arrangements of the Council.
- 5.2 This approach supports the nature of the restructuring which has taken place within the Council’s policy and performance functions, with an integrated policy and performance function now supporting each of the three council Directorates and responsible for supporting and monitoring the development of Directorate Business Plans and Strategy.

6.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 This approach to the new Corporate Plan does not have any direct financial implication either in terms of development or in setting out activities in need of funding other than officer time, however it will need to be supported by the Councils current Directorate Business Plan arrangements in setting out operational priorities and plans. Given the Council's need to make further savings however, these plans will also need to acknowledge that in order to achieve these savings, hard choices need to be made about the areas of business we need to focus on.
- 6.2 There will be a small cost for printing copies of the plan for display and distribution if this is agreed.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

Children and Young People in Halton

The Corporate Plan presents Halton Borough Council's contribution to implementing the Sustainable Community Strategy 2011-26. Children and Young People are therefore identified as a theme within the Corporate Plan. The Corporate Plan also sets out our key priorities within this theme.

Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

The Corporate Plan presents Halton Borough Council's contribution to implementing the Sustainable Community Strategy 2011-26. Employment, Learning and Skills is therefore identified as a theme within the Corporate Plan. The Corporate Plan also sets out our key priorities within this theme.

A Healthy Halton

The Corporate Plan presents Halton Borough Council's contribution to implementing the Sustainable Community Strategy 2011-26. A Healthy Halton is therefore identified as a theme within the Corporate Plan. The Corporate Plan also sets out our key priorities within this theme.

A Safer Halton

The Corporate Plan presents Halton Borough Council's contribution to implementing the Sustainable Community Strategy 2011-26. A Safer Halton is therefore identified as a theme within the Corporate Plan. The Corporate Plan also sets out our key priorities within this theme.

Environment and Regeneration in Halton

The Corporate Plan presents Halton Borough Council's contribution to implementing the Sustainable Community Strategy 2011-26. Environment and Regeneration is therefore identified as a theme within the Corporate Plan. The Corporate Plan also sets out our key priorities within this theme.

8.0 RISK ANALYSIS

8.1 The Corporate Plan is being developed at a time of considerable challenge for local authorities brought about by significant public spending cuts and changes in the way public services are delivered. By identifying strategic themes and values, but not identifying operational areas of priority and resources, this reduces the risk of the plan becoming unachievable through changes in circumstance and allows the annual Business Planning process and performance management cycle to set out key activities and outcomes.

8.2 The draft plan sets out high level visions and values and is, to some extent, an aspirational document, focusing on what the Council values and the themes it believes are critical to the quality of life of residents. It does not commit the authority particular activities or resources. Care will however need to be taken within the Business Plans to ensure that the activities contained within them are realistic and achievable within expected resources, whilst remaining sufficiently challenging to make a real difference to people's lives and expectations. Care will also need to be given to how the Corporate Plan is communicated to ensure that expectations are not raised and that there is acknowledgement and understanding of the current operating climate.

9.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

9.1 The Equality Act 2010 brings together into one Act all previous legislation around Equality and Diversity. Under the Duty a public authority must, in carrying out its functions, take into account the need to: -

(a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conflict that is prohibited by the Equality Act 2010

(b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it

(c) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it

9.2 The Act defines a number of characteristics which are protected: -

(a) Age

- (b) Disability
- (c) Gender reassignment
- (d) Marriage and civil partnership
- (e) Pregnancy and maternity
- (f) Race
- (g) Religion or belief
- (h) Sex
- (i) Sexual orientation

9.3 The Equality Act 2010 introduced a general equality duty which applies to the procurement (including commissioning) function of public authorities. The duty extends to external contractors which carry out public functions. It repealed the Local Government Act 1988 provisions in relation to permitted race relations questions in public tenders; instead, local authorities are explicitly permitted to take non-commercial matters into account during the procurement process, when they consider it is 'necessary' or 'expedient' to do so.

10.0 REASON(S) FOR DECISION

10.1 To approve the content and design of the new Corporate Plan. The Plan will run from 2015-2018.

11.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

11.1 There is no statutory requirement to have a Corporate Plan so consideration was given to the option of not producing one and relying instead on the Directorate Business Plans to fulfil this function. However, the Corporate Plan as a document does draw together the strands of the many disparate plans and strategies the Council works towards and provides a unity of vision, purpose and transparency for the organisation that would otherwise be lacking. It was therefore felt that retaining a Corporate Plan, but making it a simple document that could communicate the Council's values and priorities at a glance, would be of benefit to members, officers and the public

11.2 Consideration was given to producing a Corporate Plan based on the more traditional format that has been used in previous plan cycles. However, it was felt that the time was right to do something more innovative and flexible with the document which would better reflect the way the Council works more agilely, whilst also retaining and demonstrating its core values. This is especially important given the current operating circumstances. A fully detailed plan, committing the Council to a detailed set of actions and outcome runs the risk of becoming quickly out of date, unachievable and out of sync with the annual Business Planning process. Having a more generic plan setting out the strategic themes and aspirations of the Council will give a consistency of vision whilst being supported and underpinned by the detailed Business Plans as the delivery plans for the strategic themes.

12.0 IMPLEMENTATION DATE

12.1 The Corporate Plan is recommended for implementation from April 2015.

13.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

There are no papers under the meaning of the Act.

