

Council	
Meeting Date	7 October 2020
Report Title	Corporate plan 2020-2023 and Covid-19 recovery plan
Cabinet Member	Cllr Roger Truelove – Council Leader
SMT Lead	Emma Wiggins – Director of Regeneration
Head of Service	David Clifford – Head of Policy, Communications and Customer Services
Lead Officer	
Key Decision	No
Classification	Open
Recommendations	Council is recommended to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Adopt the corporate plan 2020-2023 at Appendix I. 2. Note the updated Covid-19 recovery plan at Appendix III.

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report recommends the final corporate plan 2020-2023 to council for adoption. The plan was endorsed by cabinet back in March, but its final adoption has been delayed by Covid. The plan has been updated slightly to highlight the connections between it and the Covid-19 recovery plan.
- 1.2 Informed by the objectives in the new corporate plan, the Covid-19 recovery plan provides more detail on how the council is working to minimise the adverse consequences of the pandemic on the borough. Following the all-member ‘forum’ meeting back in the summer, this report asks council to note an updated version of the recovery plan originally agreed by cabinet in July.

2 Background

- 2.1 The council’s corporate plan establishes the political and managerial priorities on which the organisation will focus over a medium-term period. Without attempting to cover in any detail all of the objectives to be pursued by every department, it sets the tone for future resource allocation, establishing which activities and objectives are priorities and, by implication, which are not.
- 2.2 In an era of constrained and diminishing resources, the plan endeavours to ensure that those resources are marshalled as coherently as possible so that issues which are truly priorities for residents and their representatives on the council are not crowded out by apparently more urgent but ultimately less important pieces of work.

- 2.3 The plan is a key component in the council's constitutional policy framework, within which the cabinet must exercise its executive decision-making authority. The plan also represents the strategic end of the 'golden thread' which runs down through departments' operational service plans to individual officers' annual performance appraisals, so in an ideal world it will square the circle of establishing clear priorities while also providing a 'hook' for all teams to link their work to the overall ambitions of the council.
- 2.4 It is worth emphasising that the corporate plan is primarily an internal document. Clearly its single most significant influence will be the political ambitions of the administration, and to some extent it can be seen as the managerial response to those ambitions, but it does also need to factor in the type of general contextual analysis that all organisations, including those less overtly political than a local authority, need to conduct from time to time.
- 2.5 Inclusion within the council's overarching policy framework carries with it in law some constraints which do not apply to policy documents lower down the chain, and these constraints are reflected in the council's constitution. As with the budgetary framework, adoption of the corporate plan is a matter reserved to full council, with cabinet's role being to develop the plan and propose it to council.
- 2.6 The draft plan has been the subject of a public consultation exercise, the results of which are outlined in section 5 below.
- 2.7 Moving out of the original 'emergency response' phase of the pandemic, the council recognised the likely need to realign priorities and services to help the borough to recover economically and socially from the crisis. The recovery plan is a much more fluid document than the corporate plan, setting out specific actions the council will take in the short, medium and longer terms, but recognising that there is likely to be an element of iteration between these as the situation changes.
- 2.8 The recovery plan was first taken to cabinet in July, and was then discussed at an all-member 'forum' meeting later in the same month. The version at Appendix III has been updated in response to members' comments at that meeting, and to reflect the progress which has been made since the summer. It is presented here to council for information.

3 Proposals

- 3.1 Council is now **recommended** to adopt the final version of the corporate plan at Appendix I, and to note the latest version of the recovery plan at Appendix III.

4 Alternative Options

- 4.1 Although there is a legal requirement for councils to have a definite policy framework, there is no specific requirement for a corporate plan, and a genuine option would therefore be to dispense with the document altogether.

4.2 However, a medium-term strategic plan of some kind is a near-universal feature of English councils, with the development process being used to explore, refine and achieve consensus on the meaning of political ambitions, and the final document acting as a guide to both members and officers as to the key areas on which progress must be made over the lifetime of an administration. The absence of a plan is likely to result in a lack of clarity among officers about the organisation’s priorities and less coherent decision-making by members, and is therefore not recommended.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

5.1 A public consultation was conducted on the draft version of the corporate plan between mid-January and early March. This was predominantly by means of an online survey, but key stakeholders were written to individually, including all of Swale’s parish councils. The consultation was advertised on social media and through channels such as the business bulletin, as well as internally through staff communications.

5.2 The consultation generated 15 responses, of which two were from residents, two from parish councils and six from Swale employees. The majority of responses included only general indications of support or the opposite, with relatively few specific suggestions for changes. A couple of the latter have been taken up, resulting in minor amendments to the text at appendix I. Unsystematically classifying responses as supportive, unsupportive or neutral, seven can be read as supportive (including both of the parish council responses), one as unsupportive and seven as neutral.

Policy Development and Review Committee

5.3 The policy development and review committee has considered the corporate plan twice during its development, initially feeding in its thoughts on an early draft of the priorities and objectives, and then reviewing the consultation draft of the plan during the spring. The committee showed itself to be generally supportive of the plan and its priorities, and one suggestion for an amendment to the text was taken up in the final draft at Appendix I (this relates to objective 2.5).

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	The corporate plan at Appendix I will replace the existing plan upon adoption by council.
Financial, Resource and Property	The corporate plan to some extent represents the narrative complement to the medium-term financial plan (MTFP), in that it sets out in broad terms what the council aims to achieve given the resources established by the MTFP. Conversely, it is anticipated that the activities required by the plan will generally be funded

	within the resourcing framework established in the MTFP.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	The legal status of the corporate plan as a component of the statutory policy framework has been discussed in the body of the report. This derives from the Local Government Act 2000 and regulations subsequently made under it. The relevant constitutional provisions are contained in section 4.3 of the constitution.
Crime and Disorder	The draft plan at Appendix I includes some specific points of relevance to crime and disorder, particularly under Priority 3.
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	The draft plan at Appendix I includes some specific points of relevance to the environment and to the climate and ecological emergencies, particularly under Priority 2.
Health and Wellbeing	The draft plan at Appendix I includes some specific points of relevance to health and wellbeing, particularly under Priority 3.
Risk Management and Health and Safety	Swale's approach to risk management is dependent on an articulation of objectives the achievement of which is endangered by a given set of risks. The corporate plan is therefore an essential component of the risk management framework.
Equality and Diversity	The public sector equality duty requires decision-makers to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination and advance equality of opportunity right throughout the decision-making process. A final equality impact assessment for the corporate plan is attached at appendix II. The corporate plan is in general at too high a level of abstraction for the aims of the equality duty to be relevant in any concrete way, although they are likely to be much more relevant to many of the pieces of work which will flow from the plan, which will all need to be subject to individual impact assessments. The impact of the corporate plan itself on the aims of the equality duty, without reference to these more detailed pieces of work, is considered to be low, and nothing involving unlawful discrimination or requiring the mitigation of adverse impacts has been identified.
Privacy and Data Protection	No specific implications have been identified at this stage.

7 Appendices

7.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix I: Final corporate plan 2020-2023
- Appendix II: Corporate plan equality impact assessment
- Appendix III: Covid-19 recovery plan

8 Background Papers

8.1 There are no background papers.