

Strategy & Resources Committee Tuesday, 24 November 2020

Corporate Improvement Plan update

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Publication status:	Open
Wards affected:	All
Recommendations:	That the Committee note the progress made to date.
Appendices:	Appendix A – summary of progress
Background papers defined by the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985	None

1. Background

- 1.1 At its meeting on 9th July 2020 this Committee approved a Corporate Improvement Plan. This set out a number of measures necessary to take the Council forward particularly in the light of the COVID emergency.
- 1.2 Subsequently on 28th July this Committee also approved a Strategic Plan for the District. This set out the overall programme for the Council until 2023. An update on progress made on the Improvement Plan ('the Plan') will be submitted to this Committee in March 2021.

2. Progress to date

- 2.1 Members will be aware that much of the progress on the t Plan had been delayed due to the need to focus on the Council's response to the COVID emergency.
- 2.2 Although the emergency is still very much ongoing, it has now been possible to progress many of the actions set out in the Plan. Appendix A sets out a summary of progress.

3 Key Achievements

- 3.1 Although the appendix sets out progress on the Plan as a whole it is worth drawing Members attention to some of the key achievements:

Governance

- 3.2 Following the independent report by the Centre for Public Scrutiny, a number of key recommendations have been implemented as well as other pieces of effective governance. This includes, a forward plan approach to committee work, second vice chairs for policy committees and also improved internal officer governance with an effective ELT and Departmental Leadership Team structure in place.
- 3.3 Member training is now underway. In addition, a new Member briefing programme has been introduced before each committee meeting. The first briefing in October on car parking was both well attended and Member feedback was positive.

Performance & Risk

- 3.4 The approach and methodology to performance and risk has been revised and a new template is now in use. All Committees have received at least one of the new reports and these have been well received. Performance and risk is a standing item on all Officer leadership meetings and is being closely monitored and updated.

Financial Recovery

- 3.5 Since her appointment the S151 Officer has changed the team's approach to financial management with the introduction of a finance business partner model. This has put finance at the heart of decision making and is already bringing rewards. The budget gap for this year has significantly closed and continues to do so. Work is now under way to produce a balanced budget for 2021/22 with committee workshops having taken place during October.
- 3.6 MHCLG have given highly positive feedback on progress and no longer wish to closely monitor progress but will be on hand for support if needed.

Complaints

- 3.7 A new complaints policy has been introduced and a much tighter grip on complaints is now in place with a rapid escalation to senior Officers if complaints are not responded to. Performance in this area has improved.

Shared Services

- 3.8 Although this work is slightly behind schedule, this is due to the Council needing to respond to the Unitaries proposal submitted by Surrey County Council in July. The Council was a key player in the districts and boroughs responses and in September a successful seminar on the matter was attended by over 50 district and county council members as well as Parish Council Chairs.

4. Monitoring Progress

4.1 Further reports will be submitted to this committee on progress. The next update will be submitted in March 2020 by which time the council's budget will be approved.

5. Financial / risk implications

5.1 There are no specific financial implications arising from this report. Specific actions will, where appropriate be subject to a sound financial business case and will be funded from existing resource envelopes.

6. Legal implications

6.1 The Plan is a non-statutory plan, but it is of central importance for the Council in determining its priorities. There are no direct legal implications from the Plan. Any legal issues arising from implementing the commitments in it will be explored and reviewed by the legal team.

6.2 Section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999 also requires best value authorities, including the Council, to "make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness". The development of the actions in the plan, together with their delivery and subsequent monitoring will contribute to the way in which the best value duty can be fulfilled. Monitoring reports to Committees and actions arising from those reports will help to demonstrate that the Council has undertaken activity to satisfy the statutory duty.

7. Equality impacts

7.1 The high-level priority outcomes within this plan are informed by an understanding of local communities and their needs. As significant new actions to address these priority outcomes are approved, they will each be subject to impact assessments to consider potential positive or negative impacts.

8. Climate change impacts

8.1 There are no direct implications arising from this report.

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