

**TO: EXECUTIVE  
22 OCTOBER 2019**

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**COUNCIL PLAN 2019-2023  
Chief Executive**

**1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to invite the Executive to agree the attached Council Plan and recommend it to Council.

**2 RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- 2.1 **That the Executive recommend the Council Plan 2019-2023 to Council attached at Annex A.**

**3 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- 3.1 Since becoming a Unitary Authority in 1998 the Council has made savings in its annual revenue spending in excess of £80m. Of this over £18m has been removed from budgets in the last few years. By all comparative measures, the Council provides value for money. However, pressure on public sector spending remains and further significant savings will be needed over the next five years.
- 3.2 The Council Plan is rooted firmly in the Conservative election manifesto of 2019. It puts these election commitments made then into the current financial context to provide the organisation with a strategic direction and framework to meet the challenges ahead. In order to meet this challenge, the council needs to find a framework for delivering services that allows us to adapt, innovate, find new ways of working and, in some cases, reduce what we do.

**4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 4.1 None – the Council needs a comprehensive Council Plan to provide a coherent framework to guide and prioritise its many activities over the life of this Council.

**5 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 5.1 The Council's broad approach to service planning has been in place since 2003 and has served it well. In essence the approach is based upon a "narrative" which recognises Bracknell Forest as "the borough of opportunity". The Council has striven to provide a borough which is attractive to live and work in with a strong economy, good connections and an outstanding environment. As part of the overall narrative the Council has itself adopted a pragmatic approach to service delivery and has developed a reputation for being effective, whether services are provided directly or otherwise.
- 5.2 The Council has also recognised that it has an important role in shaping the borough and this has been seen through its work to promote the regeneration of Bracknell Town Centre and in its robust approach to providing a local development framework which has protected the environment and provided a policy led framework for managing growth over many years. A key part of the Council's ethos is that it is supportive of business and the local economy. In short the Council has made

genuine and realistic attempts to please most residents for most of the time. The extent to which it has been successful can be seen in the fact that 87% of local residents believe that the borough is a good place in which to live.

- 5.3 Since the local election Members, both within the Executive and the Overview & Scrutiny Commission, have been working with the Corporate Management Team to review how best to deliver the Majority Parties election commitment. The result is a new approach to strategic planning and to Overview & Scrutiny which is facilitated in a revised Council Plan which is included in Annex A.
- 5.4 Given the significance of the document to the strategic direction of the Council it is important that it is subject to debate and consideration by the Full Council. It is therefore recommended that the Executive itself recommends the plan to the next Council Meeting on 27 November.
- 5.5 Turning to the Council Plan, Members will see that it is centred upon six strategic themes or priority areas;
  - Value for money
  - Economic resilience
  - Education and skills
  - Caring for residents and their families
  - A clean, green and responsibly sustainable place
  - Communities
- 5.6 Each theme will be underpinned by a number of annual priorities that take the Council towards the achievement of the four-year key objectives. These annual priorities will be included in individual Department Service Plans which will also contain key performance indicators reflecting the priorities and day to day operations. Progress against the Council Plan will be reported to the Executive via a quarterly overview report from the Chief Executive. At the end of the financial year an annual report will be published summarising progress made over the year.

## **6 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS**

### Borough Solicitor

- 6.1 In the event of service reductions arising as a result of the Council seeking to achieve its predicted savings targets, these will need to be carefully managed to minimise the risk of legal challenges. Where challenges against service reductions have been presented before the courts in recent years these have highlighted the need for Councils to engage in meaningful public consultation and have regard to its equality duties prior to decisions being made.

### Director: Finance

- 6.2 In parallel with the Council Plan a new Medium Term Financial Strategy is being developed to identify the scale and timing of the financial challenge facing the Council. The Council Plan and Medium Term Financial Strategy are complementary, with the Council Plan articulating the Council's strategic approach and priorities within the overall financial envelope.

### Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.3 An initial Equalities Impact Assessment screening is attached at Annex B.

### Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.4 The Council Plan is the over-arching framework and strategic approach for the organisation for the duration of the current administration. This has primarily been motivated by the anticipated future budget cuts, and the need to respond to these with a new approach. It is important that the council has a framework in place so that it can face the budget challenges ahead in a coherent and consistent way, and in this way effectively manage risk.

Other Officers

- 6.5 N/a

**7 CONSULTATION**

Principal Groups Consulted

- 7.1 Executive  
Overview and Scrutiny Commission  
Corporate Management Team  
Departmental Management Teams  
Senior Leadership Group

Method of Consultation

- 7.2 Face to Face meetings  
Email  
Telephone

Representations Received

- 7.3 The Council Plan has been in development since the May 2019 elections. Representations received have been incorporated into the document as it has developed.

Contact for further information

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