

To: Council
29 November 2023

Council Plan 2023-2027
Assistant Director: Chief Executive's Office

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To present the Council Plan and new business change programme to Council setting out agreed priorities for the period to 2027, following engagement and development with councillors and staff.
- 1.2 To propose that the Council adopts a flexible use of capital receipts strategy to maximise funding opportunities to support the delivery of the business change programme.

2 Recommendations

Council is asked to:

- 2.1 **Approve the Council Plan attached as Appendix A;**
- 2.2 **Support delivery of the Council Plan and ensure the organisation remains resilient and sustainable by endorsing the proposed Business Change programme summarised in Appendix A;**
- 2.3 **Approve with effect from 1 December 2023 a flexible use of capital receipts strategy as set out at Appendix B to provide funding needed to ensure the Council Plan and Business Change programme are successfully delivered.**

3 Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 The Council Plan is essential to the organisation's policy framework and effective operations. It outlines the priorities for the Council in the coming four years' and focuses the work to be undertaken.
- 3.2 The development of the Council Plan is based on multiple layers of engagement and development; this has led to incorporating significant feedback into the structure and wording of the content. There has been feasibility testing as part of the development, to ensure that the content has longevity for the plan period and ambitious, but realistic deliverability.
- 3.3 The plan includes a core enabling priority to be an ambitious, resilient and sustainable organisation. Much of this will be delivered through the business change programme to ensure the organisation is fit for the future. The aspiration is to be the best organisation possible. The proposed flexible use of a capital receipts strategy in Appendix B will enable the council to use capital receipts to support and enable the delivery of the business change programme's priorities and facilitate the delivery of savings and improved outcomes for service users.

4 Alternative Options Considered

- 4.1 Alternatives have been explored through the development of the plan and incorporated into the final version. Funding to support the Business Change programme could be sought from the Council's reserves, however the scale of financial pressures being faced suggests that those should be protected for alternative uses.

5 Supporting Information

- 5.1 The Council Plan sets out the overall ambition for what the council aims to achieve for, and with, residents, businesses, and partners. It is a strategy document identifying priorities and how the council will measure progress and performance. The new plan will cover the period from 2023 until 2027.
- 5.2 The Council Plan provides a framework for a more detailed set of actions detailed in annual directorate service plans. These plans will include the operational tasks and initiatives linked to each of the themes and goals. Progress in delivering against the Council Plan goals will be reported through externally published quarterly reports.
- 5.3 The development of the new Council Plan has undertaken several phases, from insights collection and mapping, to refining and feasibility testing. Each stage involved a range of stakeholders including councillors, managers, and data leads. It has been a priority to ensure that the plan is relevant for the coming four years; aspirational in the direction of travel but also feasible to deliver within the context of resources.
- 5.4 This plan does not sit in isolation and is complemented by a range of underpinning principles such as the commitment to equality, health, and climate; these strategies are all referenced. Achieving the goals of the plan and the best outcomes for residents will require a system approach, therefore joint working is a key foundation of delivering the plan.
- 5.5 The plan's enabling priority to be an ambitious, resilient, and sustainable organisation will be delivered in large part through the business change programme to ensure the organisation is fit for the future. The programme will drive savings and increased efficiency across the organisation, as well as securing transformational change to benefit service users.
- 5.6 The council has funded its work on transformation and business change in previous years from earmarked reserves. The Government announced as part of its 2016/17 finance settlement new flexibilities allowing local authorities to use capital receipts received in a financial year to be used to fund qualifying transformational expenditure in that year. This programme has been extended in the intervening years and continues to be applicable until 2024/25, with a further extension considered likely.
- 5.7 The scale of current and future pressures on the council's revenue finances, from rising costs and demand and more recently its participation in the Department for Education's Safety Valve programme, suggests that an alternative funding strategy rather than using valuable earmarked reserves should now be pursued. It is therefore proposed that the council makes use of the flexibility provided by Government by adopting the proposed Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy, attached at Appendix B. In support of this, a schedule of potential asset sales is being produced,

focusing on commercial property assets held within and outside the borough boundaries.

Next steps

- 5.8 Development is underway on agreeing the first set of service plans. These service plans will cover the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025, aligned with the budget cycle and these will include business change programme activity.
- 5.9 The first reporting period for the new Council Plan, and service plan commitments will be Q1 (April 2024 to June 2024), to be presented to Executive in September 2024. Until then, reporting will be based on the current service plans.

6 Consultation and Other Considerations

Legal Advice

- 6.1 The Council Plan forms part of the Policy Framework and a decision on its implementation is therefore reserved to a quorate meeting of the Council. As set out in Appendix B, the standard prohibition on Council's using Capital receipts for Revenue expenditure is set aside by the application of Directions issued by the Secretary of State in 2003 to the extent highlighted in paragraph 5 of the Appendix.

Financial Advice

- 6.2 The financial implications associated with delivering the Council Plan priorities will be highlighted for inclusion in the Council's 2024/25 – 2026/27 budgets. The Business Change programme is expected to realise several financial and other benefits, as set out in Appendix B. Work to deliver the programme will require additional resources which are also estimated in Appendix B, which are proposed to be funded from capital receipts (asset disposals) using the flexibility available to councils that adopt a flexible use of capital receipts strategy.

Other Consultation Responses

- 6.3 There has been significant engagement as part of developing the new Council Plan and the business change programme. This has been detailed throughout the report and the feedback included within the draft presented in Appendix A.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.4 Equality, diversity and inclusion issues are being considered as part of the process to create the new plan and change programme. An EqIA has been undertaken to consider the impact of the plan on people with protected characteristics and is attached at appendix C. No negative impacts were identified and overall, the plan aims to reduce inequality and improve prosperity in the borough. Specific EqIAs will be undertaken for business change programme projects.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.5 The Council Plan is a key part of the council's framework for performance management. The strategic commitments agreed on, and the delivery against them, will form part of issues monitored within the risk management processes.

Climate Change and Ecological Implications

- 6.6 The plan identifies the importance and the role of the council in addressing climate change and biodiversity challenges. There are specific goals and key results identified to address and reduce carbon emissions and to enhance the local biodiversity. There will be a change programme focussed on enabling the delivery of our climate change and carbon reduction goals.

Health & Wellbeing Considerations

- 6.7 The plan identifies the importance of health and wellbeing and the role the council has related to this. There are specific goals and key results identified to address the health and wellbeing of the population and monitor the local outcomes. Both physical and mental health are recognised within the plan, at universal and targeted tiers.

Background Papers

None

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Appendix A – Council Plan

[attached as separate document]

Appendix B – Flexible Use of Capital Receipts Strategy

[attached as separate document]

Appendix C – Equality Impact Assessment

[attached as separate document]