

Report of: The Elected Mayor of Middlesbrough; Chief Executive**Submitted to:** Council, 16 December 2020**Subject:** Refreshing the Strategic Plan for the 2021-24 period**Summary****Proposed decision(s)**

That Council notes the proposed strategic priorities for 2021-24 (Appendix 1) for public consultation to inform the next iteration of the Strategic Plan, to be considered by Council on 24 February 2021.

Report for:	Key decision:	Confidential:	Is the report urgent?
Decision	No	No	No

Contribution to delivery of the 2020-23 Strategic Plan

People	Place	Business
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The report commences the process of refreshing the Strategic Plan for the 2021-2024 period, ensuring that it remains current and reflective of major developments of the past year, in particular COVID-19, and those anticipated in the coming three years.

Ward(s) affected

Implementation of the Council's strategic priorities will positively impact on all wards in Middlesbrough.

What is the purpose of this report?

1. That Council's notes the proposed strategic priorities for 2021-24 (Appendix 1). It is proposed that consultation on these priorities and the 2021/22 revenue budget will form part of the first 'annual conversation' with local communities and the Council's stakeholders and inform the refresh of the Strategic Plan for the 2021-24 period, which would be presented to the Executive on 16 February 2021 prior to consideration by Council on 24 February 2021, following planned approval of 2021/22 budgets on 24 February.

Why does this report require a member decision?

2. The Strategic Plan is the Council's overarching business plan for the medium-term, and is refreshed on an annual basis. The Strategic Plan sets out the Priorities of the Elected Mayor of Middlesbrough and other corporate priorities for the Council.
3. The Strategic Plan is part of the Council's Policy Framework and so requires the approval of Full Council, as set out in Article 4.2 of the Constitution.
4. This report commences the process of refreshing the Strategic Plan for the 2021-24 period, responding to significant events in the past year, most notably the COVID-19 pandemic and the significant impacts that this has had and will continue to have on Middlesbrough's communities.

Report Background

5. Full Council approved a Strategic Plan for the period 2020-2023 on 15 January 2020. This plan incorporated the then newly-elected Mayor of Middlesbrough, Andy Preston's nine key priorities for this term of office, setting out the Council's key strategic objectives in a single, concise document for the first time.
6. Over the past year a number of significant achievements have been made in line with these objectives, notably:
 - New street warden team
 - TS1 Public Spaces Protection Order
 - Mobile CCTV patrols
 - CCTV expansion
 - ASB legal actions
 - Revised ASB policy
 - Free bulky waste collections
 - Town wide pothole purge
 - Stop the Knock
 - New commissioning model for complex needs
 - New youth provision model
 - Initial response to Ofsted inspection of Children's Services
 - 10,000 new trees
 - Prissick Base housing scheme
 - Gresham housing scheme
 - Centre Square lettings
 - Boho Zone North
 - Boho X
 - Buy Boro scheme
 - COVID-19 response.
7. However, nine days after this plan was approved, the first case of COVID-19 in Europe was reported, with the first case in the UK confirmed a week later on 31 January, in York. The first confirmed death in Middlesbrough was on 19 March and it is now well-established that since then Middlesbrough has experienced one of the highest rates of confirmed COVID-19 cases in the UK.

8. The COVID-19 pandemic (with the UK, like much of Europe, now experiencing a second wave) is an event of unprecedented global impact. The response to COVID-19, and the recovery from it, will have a significant impact on Middlesbrough's communities, its local economy and will also fundamentally change the way the Council does business in the future.
9. On 16 June 2020, the Executive received a report detailing the Council's response to COVID-19 and approved an initial recovery plan. This report set out that key to recovery will be effectively addressing local inequalities that have arisen or broadened due to COVID-19 and associated restrictions, the impact on local businesses (particularly retail) and the impact on the Council's financial position and strategic objectives. The approach to recovery will seek to identify and realise opportunities to achieve longer-term regeneration and economic development in Middlesbrough and where appropriate build on the green and digital agenda that has been expedited by the pandemic response.
10. In light of this, a report to the same meeting of the Executive outlining progress against the Strategic Plan at Year-End 2019/20 proposed that the Executive received a revised draft of the Strategic Plan for 2021-24 at this meeting, which would reflect findings and recommendations from COVID-19 recovery planning.
11. However, since that time the country has seen a resurgence of COVID-19, and a separate report to the Executive on 24 November 2020 set out the impact of this on the local approach to recovery and associated timescales. The second wave of COVID-19 will both entrench and extend the impacts outlined above, and as such it is now proposed to engage closely with local communities and stakeholders in developing the revised Strategic Plan, which will be finalised for the end of March 2021.
12. A such, the following sections set out proposals in relation to the Council's strategic aims and priorities that (subject to approval by Council) will form the basis of public consultation.

Strategic aims

13. It is proposed that the Council retain its three simple and interrelated strategic aims. These are both well-understood and remain responsive to the long-term issues facing Middlesbrough and to political direction.

People	Working with communities and other public services in Middlesbrough to improve the lives of local people.
Place	Securing improvements in Middlesbrough's housing, infrastructure and attractiveness, improving the town's reputation, creating opportunities for local people and improving our finances.
Business	Promoting investment in Middlesbrough's economy and making sure we work as effectively as possible to support our ambitions for People and Place.

Proposed revised strategic priorities

14. While the Council's aims would remain unchanged, it is proposed to refine the Council's strategic priorities to provide a greater focus for the remainder of the Mayor's term. The proposed priorities are:

- Children and young people;
- Vulnerability;
- Crime and anti-social behaviour;
- Climate change;
- COVID-19 recovery;
- Physical environment;
- Town centre;
- Culture; and
- Quality of service.

15. This would reduce the number of strategic priorities to nine in total, from 20 in the 2020-23 Strategic Plan, and complete the process of integrating the priorities of the Elected Mayor with those of the Council. Appendix 1 sets out proposed priorities for 2021-24 in detail, showing changes from the current plan.

Public consultation

16. It is proposed that the Council consults with local communities and other stakeholders on these proposed revisions to strategic priorities.

17. This consultation would take the form of the first 'annual conversation' with communities on direction of travel and future plans (including spending plans), an approach which will in future years be embedded within the Council's emerging locality working approach.

18. The annual conversation (to be branded 'Let's Talk') will build on the success of the 2020/21 budget consultation, closely involving elected members in proactively engaging stakeholders in the development of the Council's plans and spending decisions. It will have a clear brand identity and be promoted across social media and other channels, gathering both quantitative and qualitative information that will provide both real insight for the Council and real influence for respondents.

19. As part of this it is planned to hold a range of (given COVID-19) online meetings for different areas and communities of the town (involving the Mayor, Executive members, ward councillors and senior managers as appropriate). These meetings will cover:

- an update on COVID-19, including current local restrictions and guidance;
- the estimated impact of COVID-19 on Middlesbrough and the Council;
- the proposed changes to strategic priorities;
- a discussion on this and anticipated initiatives relating to that area or community;
- proposed changes to local taxation and the Council's spending plans; and
- a question and answer session (providing links to the annual conversation survey).

20. The 2020 annual conversation would run from 17 December 2020 to 31 January 2021.

Finalised document

21. The annual conversation will inform the development to the refreshed Strategic Plan for the 2021-24 period, which will be presented to the Executive on 16 February 2021 prior to consideration by Council on 24 February. Building on the economy of the current format and design, the refreshed plan will be further streamlined, aiding communication to stakeholders.

Delivery

22. To improve focus upon and strengthen delivery of the Strategic Plan, a supporting workplan will be developed in the period to March 2021, bringing together all current and planned activity in support of the Council's strategic priorities. This workplan will be presented to the Executive for approval on 16 February 2021, following the planned approval of the finalised Strategic Plan at Council on 24 February.

Timetable

23. The anticipated outline timetable for the refresh of the Strategic Plan is therefore as follows:

Date	Milestone
16/12/20	Council approval of public consultation on proposed changes.
17/12/20 – 31/01/21	Annual conversation period.
16/02/20	Executive endorsement of refreshed plan for 2021-24 in light of annual conversation.
05/03/20	Council approval of refreshed plan for 2021-24 in light of annual conversation.
16/03/20	Executive approval of Strategic Plan workplan for 2021-24 period.

What decisions are being asked for?

24. That Council notes the proposed strategic priorities for 2021-24 (Appendix 1) for public consultation to inform the next iteration of the Strategic Plan, to be considered by Council on 24 February 2021.

Why is this being recommended?

25. To commence the refresh of the Strategic Plan for 2021-24, based on real local insight through the first 'annual conversation' with local communities.

Other potential decisions and why these have not been recommended

26. The only other realistic potential decision would be to leave the Council's strategic objectives unchanged on the assumption that they are sufficiently flexible to accommodate responses to COVID-19 and other issues affecting the Council during 2020. However, this is not correct and neither would it represent an appropriate response to COVID-19, which will clearly impact local communities and the business of the Council for some years ahead.

Impact(s) of recommended decision(s)

Legal

27. Refreshing the Strategic Plan will ensure that the Council continues to set out a relevant and comprehensive programme of activity to promote improved quality of life across Middlesbrough, which both meets its legal obligations (including the overarching Duty of Best Value) and is within its financial means.

Financial

28. The Strategic Plan and the Council's annual revenue and capital budgets are developed in parallel to ensure that there is full alignment between the Council's priorities and its spending plans. In outlining an achievable programme that delivers performance improvement within reduced resources, the Strategic Plan therefore demonstrates how the Council will deliver value for money for the taxpayer in the medium-term.

Policy framework

29. The Strategic Plan forms part of the Council's Policy Framework and as such must be agreed by Full Council.

Equality and diversity

30. Proposed changes to the Council's strategic priorities have been subject to Level 1 (screening) equality impact assessment (at Appendix 2). This identified that no negative differential impacts on diverse groups and communities within Middlesbrough is anticipated from proposed changes to the Council's priorities. This assessment will be updated in line with findings from the annual conversation and presented to the Executive on 16 February and to Council on 24 February 2021.

31. It is proposed that the strategic priorities relating to vulnerability, crime and COVID-19 will become the Council's equality objectives for the period to 2024, in line with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

Risk

32. The Strategic Plan sets out a range of activity to address the key risks set out within the Council's Strategic Risk Register, which is reported to the Executive on a quarterly basis.

Actions to be taken to implement the decision

33. Subject to Council approval, the annual conversation with stakeholders would commence on 17 December and run to 31 January 2021. A finalised version of the plan, reflecting the outcomes of the annual conversation, will be presented to the Executive on 16 February and to Council on 24 February 2021.

Appendices

- 1 Proposed revised strategic priorities 2021-24
- 2 Impact assessment

Background papers

15/01/20	Council	Strategic Plan 2020-23
16/06/20	Executive	COVID-19 Response and Recovery
16/06/20	Executive	Strategic Plan 2020-23 – Progress at Year-End 2019/20
14/07/20	Executive	Empower programme
24/11/20	Executive	Refreshing the Strategic Plan for the 2021-24 period
24/11/20	Executive	Revised approach to COVID-19 Recovery

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