

Report of: The Elected Mayor of Middlesbrough; Chief Executive**Submitted to:** Executive, 16 February 2021**Subject:** Strategic Plan 2021-24**Summary****Proposed decision(s)**

That the Executive endorses the proposed Strategic Plan for 2021-24.

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**

The report refreshes the Strategic Plan for the 2021-24 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 priorities outlined within the proposed revised plan will positively impact on all wards in Middlesbrough.

What is the purpose of this report?

1. Prior to consideration by Full Council on 24 February 2021, this report seeks the Executive's endorsement of the proposed revised Strategic Plan for the period 2021-24.

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 typically refreshed on an annual basis. This refresh follows public consultation on a number of revised strategic priorities for the Council in light of the impacts of COVID-19 on local communities and the way the Council will do business in the future.
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. The Council's Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules provide for the Executive to draw up firm proposals on the Strategic Plan (Change Strategy) for submission to Full Council.

Report Background

4. Full Council approved a Strategic Plan for the period 2020-23 on 15 January 2020. This plan incorporated the then newly-elected Mayor of Middlesbrough, Andy Preston's key priorities for this term of office, setting out the Council's key strategic objectives in a single, concise document for the first time.
5. 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.
6. 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, has and will continue to 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.
7. The Executive has received reports across the past year regarding the Council's response to COVID-19 and its developing recovery plan. 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.
8. In light of this, it was considered necessary to review the Council's Strategic Plan to reflect the impacts from COVID-19 and other significant matters arising in the last year including the economic impacts of the UK's new trading arrangements with the EU and other blocs and nations.
9. On 16 December 2020, full Council agreed to retain the three simple and interrelated corporate strategic aims of People, Place and Business. These are both well-understood and remain responsive to the long-term issues facing Middlesbrough and to political direction.

10. Full Council also agreed to consult the public and other stakeholders on a set of nine revised strategic priorities to provide a greater focus for the remainder of the Mayor's term.
11. This consultation ran between 17 December 2020 and 31 January 2021, taking the form of the first annual 'Let's Talk' conversation with communities on direction of travel and future plans (including spending plans), which will in future years be further embedded within the Council's emerging locality working approach.
12. The further national lockdown during this period clearly had an impact on the response rate to the consultation (this has been evident in responses received by other local authorities in the region) and the Council did not seek to aggressively pursue responses given the ongoing emergency response. In summary:
- The Let's Talk launch video, presented by the Mayor of Middlesbrough was viewed over 2,200 times and the subsequent 23 posts across the Council's Facebook and Twitter accounts resulted in a potential reach of 70,000 people.
 - 345 people responded to the Let's Talk Survey, providing almost 1,000 comments for consideration regarding the local area, Council services, the proposed strategic priorities and the proposed approach to the 2021/22 revenue budget.
13. Briefings for the Executive and all members have been held to outline the results of the consultation.
14. The proposed strategic priorities all received the majority support of respondents, as set out below.

Proposed priority	% Agreement	% Disagreement
Children and young people	61%	13%
Vulnerability	61%	12%
Crime and anti-social behaviour	55%	32%
Climate change	43%	18%
COVID-19 recovery	60%	16%
Physical environment	57%	31%
Town centre	51%	24%
Culture	50%	14%
Quality of service	57%	21%

15. Eighty seven comments on the proposed priorities were received, with a range of issues raised, most notably relating to physical development, community safety and the need to progress delivery and achieve benefits.
16. As such no changes to the proposed strategic priorities are considered necessary as a result of the consultation. Views and comments provided regarding the proposed approach to the 2021/22 revenue budget are set out in separate report on that matter presented to this meeting of the Executive. View and comments on the local area and Council services will inform the development of the Strategic Plan workplan to be considered by the Executive on 16 March 2021.

17. Appendix 1 therefore sets out a proposed revised Strategic Plan for the 2021-24 period. The plan now includes:

- an introduction from the Mayor of Middlesbrough and the Chief Executive;
- the Council's strategic aims and its corporate values;
- progress to date;
- strategic priorities for 2021-24;
- delivery and outcomes;
- further information.

18. Other matters previously outlined in the plan will be set out a range of Directorate Plans to be developed for 2021/22.

What decisions are being asked for?

19. That the Executive endorses the proposed Strategic Plan for 2021-24.

Why is this being recommended?

20. To enable Full Council to consider a Strategic Plan for the 2021-24 period at its meeting of 24 February 2021 that responds to impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and other significant changes to the Council's operating environment arising in the past year.

Other potential decisions and why these have not been recommended

21. It is imperative that the Council effectively articulates and communicates an overarching plan to direct activity across Directorates towards the achievement of its strategic priorities.

22. 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.

23. The only other feasible decisions therefore relate to the structure of the document, and its horizon (i.e. reverting to an annual plan). It is strongly in the Council's interest to plan over the medium-term, in line with the indicative budgets over this period outlined by the Government. The proposed document achieves this while providing an appropriate level of detail for all audiences on the Council's planned activity over this period.

Impact(s) of recommended decision(s)

Legal

24. Implementation of the Strategic Plan will enable the Council to operate within the resources available to it, and continue to meet its various statutory duties, including the overarching Duty of Best Value.

Financial

25. 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 (and its supporting workplan) therefore demonstrates how the Council will deliver value for money for the taxpayer in the medium-term.

Policy framework

26. The Strategic Plan (Change Strategy) forms part of the Council's Policy Framework and as such must be agreed by Full Council. Approval of the proposed Strategic Plan by Full Council therefore will update the Policy Framework.

Equality and diversity

27. The proposed Strategic Plan has been subject to Level 1 (screening) equality impact assessments (at Appendix 2). This identified that no negative differential impacts on diverse groups and communities within Middlesbrough is anticipated from the delivery of the Elected Mayor's priorities or other activity set out within the Strategic Plan.

28. Detailed activity underpinning the Strategic Plan 2021-24 will be set out in the Strategic Plan workplan to be considered by the Executive at its meeting of 16 March 2021. This workplan and any initiatives arising from it (where required) will be impact-assessed separately.

29. The strategic priorities relating to vulnerability, crime and anti-social behaviour and COVID-19 recovery will be adopted as the Council's equality objectives for the period to 2024, in line with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010.

Risk

30. The proposed 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

31. Subject to the Executive's endorsement, the proposed revised Strategic Plan for 2020-24 will be presented to Full Council on 24 February 2021 for consideration.

32. 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 March 2021, assuming Council approval of the proposed revised Strategic Plan as set out above.

Appendices

- 1 Proposed Strategic Plan 2021-24
- 2 Impact Assessment

Background papers

15/01/20 Council Strategic Plan 2020-23

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