

**Draft Strategic Plan (101216/CAB012)**

**To:** Cabinet

3<sup>rd</sup> February 2011

**Main Portfolio Area:** Leader

**Author of report:** Robert Hardy – Interim Head of Policy & Partnerships

**Classification:** Non-exempt

**Ward:** All

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**Executive Summary:**

In 2006 the first version of our current strategic planning document was formulated to set out the Council's approach to delivering its agreed corporate priorities. In 2008, the Plan was revised to reflect the Council's Vision and the revised Sustainable Community Strategy. Both of these documents were subject to extensive consultation (including work with all three tiers of councillors at a 'Councillor Convention').

Since 2008, the Council has been subject to considerable additional changes, challenges and pressures including the recession, the election of a new coalition government which has itself brought considerable changes to the way in which public services are delivered, huge reductions in government grant and a major restructure of the Council's staffing structure to realign its services, improve customer satisfaction and enable significant savings to be made.

The Strategic Plan is a vital document in setting out the Council's aims and ambitions and strengthening medium-term planning and it is vital that it is widely owned and understood. Accordingly, work has been undertaken to ensure that it is a much more streamlined and focussed document. Work has also been undertaken to ensure that it takes advantage of the abolition of the national target and inspection structures to focus on local priorities.

The current version of the document sets out the Council's four key priorities which were set out in the Vision 2026 document and reaffirmed by Cabinet in December 2010 ('Prosperous', 'Green', 'Healthy' and 'Confident'). These priorities underpin the design and delivery of council services, the prioritisation and allocation of resources and the achievement of value for money. Whilst the Plan sets out high level strategic objectives, projects and outcomes, further work is required to develop a comprehensive delivery framework. The Strategic Plan is presented to Council by Cabinet for approval in February each year alongside the Budget. In January, the Council elected a new Leader and Cabinet and he has indicated that he wishes to take some time to review this delivery framework. We are therefore proposing that Council should approve this high-level Strategic Plan at its meeting in February but that a further, amended version should be brought back for consideration in June 2011.

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## **Corporate Priorities**

The Strategic Plan articulates the delivery goals which underpin all the corporate priorities, activities and partnership arrangements that the Council undertakes.

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## **Report status**

For recommendation to Full Council to approve.

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## **Route to Implementation/Timetable:**

The Strategic Plan is the key document to set out the Council's medium-term priorities. Following approval by Cabinet it will be sent for final approval by Full Council at its meeting on 23 February. Together with the Budget and other key policy documents, the Strategic Plan makes up the Council's Policy Framework which sets out the parameters within which Cabinet operates and the key objectives and projects they will pursue.

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## **Background**

1. The last two years have seen the worst economic crisis in recent history and what originated on the world stage has also affected Tunbridge Wells. The budget deficit reduction programme has had a significant impact on the Council and local government generally has suffered one of the severest levels of cuts in the public sector with one of the heaviest levels of front-loading. The provisional local government settlement has seen proposed reductions of over 26 per cent in central government funding over the next two years. As the Budget papers elsewhere on this agenda make clear, the Council has worked exceptionally hard to anticipate and prepare for these cuts and is extremely well prepared for the reductions in central government grant because it took tough decisions over the past few years including an early decision to reduce its reliance on interest from reserves, a decision to restructure the organisation and reduce staffing numbers, a decision to explore partnership working with other authorities and considerable work to drive efficiencies out of its major contracts.
2. This report sets out a radically different approach to the Strategic Plan. It also includes in Appendices 1 to 4 a summary of the overall plan and the supporting documents.

## **The Changing Policy Landscape**

3. Whilst this report does not propose to revisit the goals set out in our vision for Tunbridge Wells in 2026, it does give us the opportunity to revise or remove any goals or targets that we felt were externally imposed by either central Government or external inspectors and to focus on what matters to local residents, businesses and visitors. This also means that the final version of the plan can be significantly shorter than the 27 page document we produced last year.

## The Vision for Kent

4. A new county-level Community Strategy is out to formal consultation at the moment, updating the Vision for Kent. Three Countywide Ambitions have been developed in conjunction with partners, and borough and district Councils to form the new Vision for Kent. They are:

**To grow the economy** - for Kent to be 'open for business' with a growing, successful economy and jobs for all

**To tackle disadvantage** - for all people in Kent to achieve their potential and to have increased confidence that their quality of life is improving

**To put the citizen in control** - for all people in Kent to be able to use their own resourcefulness to take control and responsibility for themselves, their families and communities

## Tunbridge Wells Together – Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)

5. The Council's Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) is currently refreshing the Sustainable Community Strategy. The refresh of this strategy has been put on hold during the review of the Vision for Kent and needs to be drawn to a speedy conclusion over the next few weeks. The new strategy will drive the work of the LSP and will identify a range of locally-determined targets.
6. In turn we will need to review our own partnership arrangements to ensure that these are the most effective means to achieve the goals set out in our long term vision. It is likely that this will reduce the number and scale of formal partnership meeting and put more emphasis on the day to day commitment to working in partnership.

## **The Draft Strategic Plan 2011-2012**

7. Given the level of changes as outlined above, the Strategic Plan is being refreshed to ensure that it is sustainable and deliverable in light of these new drivers as well as aligning with the Council's.
8. The new Strategic Plan retains the Council's existing priorities under the four headings of 'Prosperous', 'Healthy', 'Confident' and 'Green'. In addition, it also reflects the commitment to excellent customer service, strong value for money and a new approach to assessing staff contribution as part of the move to local pay.
9. Appendix 1 shows the list of proposed projects and initiatives relating to the four community-facing priorities
10. Before embarking on the consultation process on this last element, this report offers Cabinet an opportunity to consider the long-term goals agreed with partners, the national and local changes which might affect them and the timescale for moving from long-term goals to the specific priorities and commitments for 2011/12.

## **Prosperous, Healthy, Confident and Green Communities**

11. Building on the previous Strategic Plan, the Council has outlined its priorities as supporting Prosperous, Healthy, Confident and Green communities with the following ambitions:

## 12. PROSPEROUS

By 2026:

- Royal Tunbridge Wells will be the best town centre in the South East to live, work and visit, supported by thriving centres of Paddock Wood, Southborough and Cranbrook;
- The borough more generally will have enhanced its natural and built assets while planning for and accommodating future growth;
- The borough will have capitalised on the new PFI hospital at Pembury by using it as a hub to boost the health-based economy of the wider area;
- The borough will have used its designation as a Regional Hub to increase investment in infrastructure, such as roads and public transport;
- We will have increased local employment opportunities for our residents
- We will ensure that people have access to training and educational opportunities to improve their skills whilst seeking employment or to aid their employment. In particular we will work with partners to develop the learning environment and prepare a flexible workforce for future opportunities.

## 13. GREEN

By 2026:

- Tunbridge Wells will remain a beautiful place to live, work and relax;
- Individuals, communities and businesses will have taken action to reduce their use of natural resources to minimise carbon dioxide emissions, including the use of renewable energy and the installation of home insulation measures;
- We will have a local environment that is resilient and adaptable to a changing climate supporting a wide range of biodiversity;
- We will have transformed the vacant, derelict and run-down sites that currently spoil some of the town centres;
- The historic built environment that provides a powerful sense of identity will be maintained in good order and enhanced through high quality redevelopment of existing poorly built assets, set within an immaculate and distinctive public domain;
- The superb countryside of the borough is managed to protect and enhance its contribution to quality of life for those that live here whilst accommodating a vibrant rural economy;
- All residential properties in the borough should conform to the highest standards of sustainable resource conservation to minimise energy use, carbon footprint, fuel poverty and water consumption;
- The borough will have locally derived renewable energy sources to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions including biomass, ground and air source energy, together with wind and solar sources where compatible with other environmental considerations;
- The citizens of the borough will continue to enjoy easy access to open space for recreation, including parks and play areas and the countryside;
- The need to travel to work within and outside the borough will be reduced by increased opportunities to work from home, and encouragement of green travel plans amongst business and public sector employers;
- The quantity of waste generated by citizens of the borough will decline supported by less packaging and more recycling and composting activity.

14. HEALTHY

By 2026:

- Residents of areas of the borough that currently experience poor health will have improved to the level of the best today. Health for the population as a whole will substantially exceed national, regional and county averages;
- The community will be active with very high levels of participation in physical and cultural activities;
- The housing market in the borough will provide a range of high quality homes meeting the housing needs of all residents with a range of tenures including affordable homes which provide real housing options for local people;
- The housing conditions of the borough's most vulnerable residents will have significantly improved through targeted support;
- Residents will enjoy improved home energy efficiency, which will positively benefit both them (through reduced fuel costs and improved living conditions) and the environment through reduced carbon emissions;
- Our older population will be active and there will be increased opportunities to take part in recreational and physical activities.

15. CONFIDENT

By 2026:

- The borough will continue to have some of the lowest levels of crime in the South East and, as a result, communities will feel safe;
- Young people will have the opportunity to participate in a range of activities and be able to influence decision-making;
- A thriving community pride culture will have developed with high levels of volunteering and public involvement;
- Tunbridge Wells will be a cohesive borough – a borough where people with different backgrounds, faiths and beliefs and where different generations will get on well together;
- The borough will be a place of opportunity – with high levels of educational attainment and skills, ease of access to a range of good quality employment and opportunities for independent living;
- Families and in particular young people will be supported to achieve their full potential.

16. With the advent of the new coalition Government there has also been an expressed desire to move towards 'Big Society' and localism. Local government will be awarded a general power of competence which allows authorities greater freedoms, underpinning the more responsible role that will be played by local government in the future.

17. It is therefore an appropriate juncture to consider the above priorities and associated statements to ensure that they are still relevant, paying particular regard to the formation of the new coalition Government and its ambition to reduce the national deficit within five years. The cabinet is also asked to consider the associated impact that the reduction of the deficit will have and, if it feels it is appropriate, make any necessary recommendations, subtractions or additions to the strategic priorities.

18. Since the last Strategic Plan there have been a number of TWBC Select Committee reviews and reports, whose recommendations ought to be considered as part of the suite of priorities in this plan.

19. The impact of the Government's Localism Bill is becoming clearer, both in relation to its emphasis on putting decision making and responsibilities in the hands of local people and on the impact on the planning system. This needs to be taken into account more fully.
20. Finally, as part of its response to the Localism Bill and its own Strategic Plan 'Bold Steps for Kent', Kent County Council has made a clear commitment to what it calls 'locality-based commissioning' of services through joint political structures between the County Council and District/Borough Councils. Cabinet may want to take account of the opportunities this may present for the achievement of local priorities.

### Cross cutting issues

#### Legal

21. No issues.

#### Finance and other resources, including ICT Staffing

22. The draft Strategic Plan sets out the Council's priorities for service delivery and improvement between 2011 and 2012 and is developed in conjunction with the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

#### Value for money

23. Delivering Value for Money is a key customer service commitment and underpins the draft Strategic Plan.

#### Risk Management

24. Any proposals and initiatives proposed within the draft Strategic Plan would be subject to the Council's risk management procedures. These are operated at two levels, strategic risks and operational risks.

#### Equalities

25. An Equality Impact Assessment on the draft Strategic Plan will be undertaken and will be further informed by the consultation process.

| Screening for equality impacts  |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| Question  | Answers/Notes   |  |
| Does the activity have the potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community? | Yes<br><input type="checkbox"/>   | Please explain:  |
|   | No<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/>                                       | Please explain:<br>The Strategic Plan sets out the overarching ambitions for the Council. Any specific projects mentioned within the Plan would be subject to EIA as required. |
|   | Note: if the answer is 'yes' then a full equality impact assessment is required |  |
| Does the activity make a positive contribution to promoting equality?   | Yes<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/>                                      | Please explain: The draft Plan seeks to ensure our residents receive services and benefits in line with community priorities   |
|   | No<br><input type="checkbox"/>  | Please explain:  |
|   | Note: if the answer is 'yes' then a full equality impact assessment is required |  |

### *Safer & Stronger Communities*

26. The draft Strategic Plan contributes to achieving our Corporate Priority of 'Confident' communities and sets out key objectives for delivering against this. Specific targets for improving feelings of safety and increasing volunteering opportunities are included.

### *Health & Wellbeing*

27. The draft Strategic Plan contributes to achieving our Corporate Priority of 'Healthy' communities and sets out key objectives for delivering against this. Specific initiatives are detailed which will contribute to improving health outcomes for local communities.

### *Environment / Sustainability*

28. The draft Strategic Plan contributes to achieving our Corporate Priority of 'Green' and seeks to ensure all the Council's activities are sustainable as required by our resident. Specific initiatives for reducing emissions and improving recycling are included.

### *Human Rights Act*

29. No issues.

### *Communication and Consultation*

30. The draft Strategic Plan is being developed following discussions with Cabinet the Senior Management Team, Heads of Service, including the Legal Services Manager/Monitoring Officer and the Head of Finance and Governance. The Plan supports the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

The Strategic Plan priorities have been subject to consultation including the following:

- Key Partners including the Police, West Kent NHS, Kent County Council
- Tunbridge Wells Together
- Local communities and community organisations
- Parish and Town Councils
- All councillors

### **Conclusion**

31. The Strategic Plan is the key document to describe what the Council wants to achieve and how it intends to achieve it. In light of the changed circumstances to the economy and political climate, it is prudent that the Council reflects on its priorities to ensure that they are still valid in a post recession environment.
32. Following consultation on the priorities, the draft strategic plan 2011-2012 will be finalised and brought to Cabinet in June 2011.

### **Recommendations**

1. That Cabinet considers the new approach to an integrated Strategic Plan and agrees to adopt this approach.
2. That the high-level 'wheel' (a form of balanced scorecard) be adopted as an approach to ensure that the Council delivers on community priorities and customer care commitments and that staff and financial resources are aligned to support them.
3. That the high level strategic objectives, projects and outcomes for the quadrants relating to customers, people and value be agreed.

4. That Cabinet comment on the appropriateness of the ambitions set out within the existing priority themes (Prosperous, Confident, Green and Healthy) and agree a set of high-level strategic objectives for each
5. That Cabinet agree to begin a process of internal, partner and public consultation on the priorities for the Strategic Plan in time for a final report to be brought back to the June meeting of Council.

**Reason for recommendation:**

To enable the draft strategic plan 2011-2012 to be further developed in light of the changed economic and political environment.

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