

Surrey Heath Borough Council
Performance and Finance Scrutiny Committee
24 January 2024

Draft Council Strategy 2024 – 2028

| | |
|---|--|
| Strategic Director/Head of Service | Sally Kipping – Head of HR, Performance and Communications |
| Report Author: | Sarah Bainbridge – Organisational Development Manager |
| Wards Affected: | All |

Summary and purpose

This report sets out a new draft Council Strategy for 2024 – 2028, and seeks comments and feedback from the Scrutiny Committee before the draft Strategy is considered by the Executive at their meeting in February.

Recommendation

The Committee is advised to CONSIDER the draft Council Strategy 2024 – 2028 as attached at Annex A, and submit any comments to the Executive for consideration at their meeting on 13 February 2024.

1. Background and Supporting Information

- 1.1 This draft Strategy seeks to ensure that the Council has a clear direction for the future, with a focus on accountability, community and transparency, which draws on the wider aspirations and priorities of local residents and stakeholders.
- 1.2 The Council's previous Five Year Strategy was adopted in 2021, following an extensive consultation with local residents, community organisations and stakeholders to listen to their priorities and aspirations for the borough.
- 1.3 A new Council term began in 2023, following elections in May and June 2023. This draft Strategy has been developed to reflect the feedback received in the 2021 consultation, and represent the priorities of the new Council. A draft of the new Strategy was shared with wider partners at the Surrey Heath Partnership meeting in December 2023 as an update to the previous consultation.

- 1.4 The Council Strategy sits alongside the Medium-Term Financial Strategy to set the overall direction of the Council. It plays a crucial role in focusing the resources of the Council on overarching goals to deliver for local residents.
- 1.5 The draft Strategy recognises the key community leadership role of the Council in helping to address the challenges and concerns impacting on Surrey Heath's residents and businesses, as well as focusing on the services delivered directly by the Council.
- 1.6 The five priorities identified in the new draft Strategy are:
- Protect our Environment
 - Promote Healthier and More Inclusive Communities
 - Support a Strong Economy and Create More Homes
 - Campaign for Residents
 - Deliver Effective Services with Sustainable Finances
- 1.7 The Strategy is delivered each year through a set of project and targets agreed in the Annual Plan. The draft Annual Plan 2024/25 – which is also on the agenda for this meeting for consideration – sets out actions to deliver the first year of the new Strategy. This then cascades to team projects and plans and individual staff appraisals.
- 1.8 Following this meeting, the draft Strategy will be considered by the Executive at their meeting on 13 February 2024, before coming to Full Council for approval (alongside the Medium Term Financial Strategy) on 21 February 2024.

2. Reasons for Recommendation

- 2.1 This draft Strategy seeks to ensure that the Council has a clear direction for the future, with a focus on accountability, community and transparency, which draws on the wider aspirations and priorities of local residents and stakeholders.
- 2.2 This report and recommendation seeks input and feedback from Members across the Council prior to the final Strategy being brought forward for approval.

3. Contribution to the Council's Five Year Strategy

- 3.1 This draft Council Strategy 2024 - 2028 replaces the previous Five Year Strategy.

4. Resource Implications

- 4.1 The Medium Term Finance Strategy is being developed alongside the draft Council Strategy and reflects the priorities within it.

4.2 In the preparation of the new Strategy, and the subsequent Annual Plans, the Council will always need to have regard to the funding and resources available and ensure that the aspirations set out reflect this.

5. Section 151 Officer Comments:

5.1 The Corporate Peer Challenge in 2023 identified the need to set a balanced budget over the period of the Council Strategy, and reduce the reliance on the use of reserves to set the annual budget.

6. Legal and Governance Issues

6.1 The Strategy sets the overarching ambitions for the Council to deliver for residents and the borough. This cascades to an Annual Plan agreed each financial year, aligned with the Council's budget, and on to individual staff appraisal targets.

6.2 The new Strategy will be considered by the Executive at their meeting on 13 February. The Strategy will then be sent to Full Council for final approval, under Article 4.2 (l) of the Council's Constitution; *"matters which are fundamental to the future strategy or strategies of the Council, affect the whole of the Borough and are matters on which the views expressed, in the opinion of the Chief Executive, should be that of the whole Council."*

7. Monitoring Officer Comments:

7.1 No Monitoring Officer comments arising.

8. Other Considerations and Impacts

Environment and Climate Change

8.1 A key priority in the draft Strategy is Protecting our Environment and driving to net zero emissions.

Equalities and Human Rights

8.2 Promoting Healthier and More Inclusive Communities is a key priority in the draft Strategy, including championing greater equity and inclusion.

Risk Management

8.3 Without a coherent Council Strategy in place there is a risk that the Council's work and resources do not achieve the desired outcomes for the Borough, residents and businesses.

Community Engagement

- 8.4 The new draft Strategy reflects the feedback gathered in an extensive consultation in 2021 with local residents, community organisations and stakeholders to listen to their priorities and aspirations for the borough. It was also shared with wider partners at the Surrey Heath Partnership in December 2023.

Annexes

Annex A – Surrey Heath Borough Council Draft Council Strategy 2024 - 2028

Background Papers

Surrey Heath Borough Council – Five Year Strategy Consultation Report - 2021