

## A New Five Year Strategy For Surrey Heath Borough Council

### Summary

This report provides an update to the Committee on the preparation of the new Five Year Strategy, seeks the Committee's comments on the issues and priorities raised to date, and asks for the Committee's views on the relative priority of these. It also sets out the arrangements for the public, partner and business consultation.

**Portfolio: Leader**

**Wards Affected: All**

### Recommendation

The Performance and Finance Scrutiny Committee is advised to

- i) note and comment on the proposed overarching priorities for the Strategy and the key issues raised at the initial Member and partner workshops;
- ii) comment on the issues it considers should be particular priorities in the future strategy, or any areas that should be less of a priority;
- iii) note the plans for the consultation exercise and that the results, together with a draft strategy, will come to this Committee's meeting on 7 September 2021.

## 1. Key Issues

### Background

- 1.1 The Performance and Finance Scrutiny Committee received an update about the preparation of a new Five Year Strategy at its meeting on 17 March 2021.
- 1.2 At the Executive on 25 May 2021, a cross-party Task & Finish group was appointed to input into and steer the development the production of the new strategy and the analysis of feedback received during the public and partner consultation exercise.
- 1.3 Two Member workshops to identify key issues for the strategy took place on Wednesday, 9 June at 10am and 6.30pm. The discussions identified areas of work that Member's felt that the Council needed to work on, but also these needed to be kept under review throughout the 5 year period.
- 1.4 Two partner workshops took place on Thursday, 10 June and Tuesday, 15 June. There was a good response from partners to the workshop invitations and partners appreciated and valued the collaborative approach that the Council was taking as a community leader to bring stakeholders together and engage partners at an early state.
- 1.5 The factors below were shared with Members and partners at the workshops as key influences on the Council's future direction.
  - a) *The need for sustained economic and social recovery following the devastating impact of the pandemic*
  - b) *The declaration of a Climate Emergency*
  - c) *The Council's role in tackling poverty in the local community*

- d) *The role of the Council in improving health and wellbeing and support for the most vulnerable in the community*
- e) *A focus on our villages and rural communities across the borough*
- f) *With changing retail and working habits, redefining what makes Camberley Town Centre and the village centres successful places*
- g) *A greater recognition of the need for affordable housing for local people as a fundamental foundation for living full and productive lives*
- h) *Concern about the impact of growing rates of obesity on the life chances of local residents*
- i) *Putting customer service at the centre of what the Council does*
- j) *The Council's attitude to collaboration with other Councils including sharing staff and putting in place shared service delivery*
- k) *A desire for stronger partnership working*
- l) *Keeping the borough a safe place for everyone and enforcing the rules so that no one behaves like they are above the law*
- m) *Responding to greater usage levels of the Council's parks and open spaces*

1.6 Across all four workshops there was a high level of support for the factors listed above, and feedback from partners that their own priorities aligned closely.

1.7 Prominent issues that arose at the Member workshops were:

- a) Provision of enough housing that is truly 'affordable' and the importance of a decent, safe home on people's life chances;
- b) Congestion / traffic and the impact of development on these;
- c) Better working with the voluntary sector and reducing duplication;
- d) Ensuring a key focus on our villages and improvements needed – particularly issues such as connectivity, retail, development and loneliness/isolation;
- e) The importance of climate change, the environment and biodiversity;
- f) Support of retail – particularly niche or independent – in the borough
- g) Addressing poverty and inequalities across the borough and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic

1.8 Prominent issues that arose at the partner workshops were:

- a) A desire for partnership approach, and a shared strategy for the future. Building on the excellent foundations of collaborative working in Surrey Heath that were further strengthened during the Pandemic. Working together to combat the impacts of Covid-19.
- b) Addressing areas of need and inequality across the borough – including supporting those who have found themselves in need for the first time.
- c) Addressing digital exclusion (particularly faced by older people or those with disabilities), and at the same time being mindful of the national increase in cybercrime and fraud.
- d) Focusing on young people and families, including upskilling families, providing facilities for young people, supporting mental health and addressing issues such as knife crime.

- e) Tackling isolation and loneliness – particularly among elderly people – which has been impacted by Covid and also reflects the lack of connectivity between our villages and rural areas. Supporting people to be confident in reintegrating into their communities post-Covid.
- f) Housing – affordability and supply issues in the borough and recognising that a safe, decent, quality home has an undeniable impact on a person’s health, education and employment.
- g) Harnessing the capacity of the voluntary sector and community volunteers and working together to ensure best use of resources and avoid duplication.
- h) Support for businesses across the borough to be resilient and grow provide on-going employment opportunities.
- i) Ensuring engagement with different ethnic groups across the borough.

1.9 In considering all of the feedback at its meeting on 23 June, the Task & Finish Group proposed that the three overarching priorities for the Strategy should be **Health & Quality of Life, Economy and Environment**. All the issues and objectives for the Strategy would then flow from these three key areas.

1.10 The Performance & Finance Committee is asked to note and comment on the proposed overarching priorities for the Strategy and the key issues raised at the Member and partner workshops. The Committee is asked which of the issues it considers should be particular priorities in the future strategy, or any areas that are less of a priority.

## 2. Consultation

2.1 Engagement and consultation are key elements of preparation of the new strategy, and consultation with the public, partners, businesses and staff will take place over the summer. The consultation will seek to gather both quantitative and qualitative data in variety of methods. Significant promotion of the consultation will take place across a number of different channels, and using pre-existing networks where possible. The planned elements are:

- Public online survey (with paper copy available on request),
- Partner online survey
- Business online survey.
- Partner presentations/discussions
- Public Focus Groups
- Presentations/discussions at different political group meetings.
- Materials and Feedback Framework for councillors to facilitate resident discussion
- SHBC Staff Survey

2.2 This Committee will receive an update on the results of the consultation, and the draft Five Year Strategy at its meeting on 7 September 2021, ahead of the Strategy being considered by the Executive on 21 September 2021, and Full Council in October.

## 3. Resource Implications

3.1 Mostly officer time, with some additional costs for paid social media adverts to come from existing budgets. The Medium Term Financial Strategy will be prepared alongside the Five Year Strategy and reflect the priorities in it.

3.2 In the preparation of the new Five Year Strategy, the Council will need to have regard to the funding available, and ensure that the aspirations set out reflect this.

#### **4. Corporate Objectives And Key Priorities**

4.1 The Council's Five Year Strategy is the main vehicle for agreeing Corporate Objectives and Key Priorities.

#### **5. Policy Framework**

5.1 The Five Year Strategy is one of the key elements of the Policy Framework of the Council.

#### **6. Legal Issues**

6.1 No specific Legal issues arising.

#### **7. Governance**

7.1 The proposed timetable for the preparation and adoption of the new Five Year Strategy includes significant opportunity for scrutiny, public and partner input and transparency of decision making.

#### **8. Risk Management**

8.1 Without a coherent Five Year 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.

#### **9. Equalities Impact**

9.1 An equalities impact assessment will be carried out on the final public consultation arrangements and the final Draft Strategy.

#### **10. Human Rights**

10.1 No specific Human Rights implications arising from this report.

#### **11. Environmental Impact**

11.1 The Strategy is likely to include the Council's commitment to reducing Climate Change.

#### **12. Consultation**

12.1 Public and Partner consultation forms a key part of this report - see Annexe A.

#### **13. PR And Marketing**

13.1 See Consultation above.

<b>Annexes</b>	None
<b>Background Papers</b>	Surrey Heath Borough Council Five Year Strategy 2016 - 21
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