

Slough Borough Council

Report To:	Cabinet
Date:	27 February 2023
Subject:	Refresh of Corporate Plan
Lead Member:	Councillor James Swindlehurst, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Council Recovery, Forward Strategy & Economic Development
Chief Officer:	Stephen Brown
Contact Officer:	Sarah Hayward
Ward(s):	All
Key Decision:	NO
Exempt:	NO
Decision Subject To Call In:	NO
Appendices:	Appendix 1 – Outline framework of Corporate Plan and timetable for approval

1. Summary and Recommendations

1.1 This report sets out the process for a refresh of the Corporate Plan taking account of developments since the current plan 'Doing Right by Slough' was approved by Council in May 2022.

1.2 Specifically, it enables the Council to set out its strategic direction in light of the progress made during the past year, particularly the authority now has a far better understanding of the work needed to recover; and, to take account of recent developments including the release of Census data on our population as well as the views of Commissioners on the issues that need to be addressed to ensure the future of the council is viable.

Recommendations:

1.3 Cabinet is recommended to:

- a) Approve the process, timetable and consultation plans for a refreshed Corporate Plan as set out in Appendix 1.
- b) Delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader, to finalise the draft Corporate Plan for public consultation following the elections in May 2023.

Reason

- 1.4 The current Corporate Plan 'Doing Right by Slough' was approved by Council in May 2022 and set out the council's strategy for improvement against the Directions issued by the Secretary of State.
- 1.5 Since then Commissioners have written to the Secretary of State setting out the position of the council one year after their appointment.
- 1.6 There are a number of key strategic issues that need to be articulated in the Corporate Plan including:
- the strategic direction of the council
 - its purpose and priority outcomes
 - culture and values
 - how priorities are based on need and reflect an analysis of evidence and data
 - the role of the council and how it will work in partnership with others to deliver outcomes.
- 1.7 Detailed reporting against the issues raised by Commissioners is contained in a separate report to Cabinet in the form of a quarterly update on the Improvement and Recovery programme.

Commissioner Review

The views of Commissioners are fully set out in the December letter to Ministers.

2. Report

Introduction

- 2.1 The current Corporate Plan provided a strategic framework for the council during 2022.
- 2.2 Commissioners have written to the Secretary of State setting out their assessment of the current position of the council and how they are concerned at the long term viability of the council given the scale of the challenges it faces and the progress and changes required to address the issues that led to intervention.
- 2.3 A refresh of the Corporate Plan is required to set out the council's medium-term plan to becoming a viable entity.
- 2.4 In the development of this report Commissioners have challenged officers over the pace for delivery of the Corporate Plan and the timeframe for sign-off. In consideration of this officers reviewed the range of inputs required to inform a holistic refresh of the previous document. The timetable for development and sign-off is included in the Appendix to this report.
- 2.5 A refresh of the Corporate Plan at this time enables the following:
- An opportunity to review the latest data and insight from the ONS data sets from the 2021 Census. This is the first up to date population data the council has had for 10 years.

- An opportunity to consult on and agree a Corporate Plan shortly after the whole Council elections on 4 May to inform the Council's activities for the next four years.
- To be informed by resident views, which will be acquired from a resident engagement survey undertaken by the LGA in January/February and further public consultation following the May elections. Consultation with taxpayers, service users and other interested parties is a requirement to inform decisions on how the Council meets its best value duty to secure continuous improvement in the way its functions are exercised.

3 Options considered

- 3.1 Do nothing. Leave the current plan as it is. This is not recommended as it does not allow the longer term plans to take account of recent Census data nor does it allow for full public engagement on the priorities.
- 3.2 Prepare a refresh of Corporate Plan for approval in line with the timetable in the appendix (**recommended**)

4 Background

- 4.1 In May 2022, the council approved its new corporate plan for 2022-25 - 'Doing Right by Slough', which incorporated the recovery and improvement plan the council was required to produce in accordance with the Government's directions.
- 4.2 This replaced the previous Five Year Plan as Slough Borough Council's corporate plan.
- 4.3 The new corporate plan included a new set of strategic priorities for the council, that described the outcomes to be delivered for the communities of Slough. These were determined by the Council's political priorities, as well as an interrogation of data on Slough including the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, Index of Multiple Deprivation, service level data on people and place, survey data and engagement feedback.
- 4.4 The Plan included an updated recovery framework of seven themes to deliver the 'Right Council for Slough'
 - Leadership & Culture
 - Financial recovery and onward sustainability
 - Business planning and performance management
 - Governance
 - Organisational capability, capacity and resilience
 - Technological capability, capacity and resilience
 - Resident engagement
- 4.5A refresh of the Plan is now required as explained in the introductory sections above. The need for a new plan recognises that that a year in to the government intervention the Council now knows much more about what it needs to do to cement recovery and deliver for Slough's residents. Significant progress has been made in some areas, but other issues have moved less quickly and need greater focus.

4.6 Doing Right By Slough was also written to engage the whole council in the recovery. The Council did no consultation and little communication with our residents and partners about the corporate plan and our recovery. Since the council will need to deliver fewer services and deliver some services in different ways, it is important to engage residents and partners on its corporate priorities and how these will be measured.

5 Implications of the Recommendation

Financial implications

5.1 There are no direct financial implications as a result of the recommendations contained in this report. Any actions arising from the recommendations will be funded from within existing budgets

Legal implications

5.2 Section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999 states that the Council must make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. In deciding how to fulfil this duty the Council must consult representatives of council tax and business rates taxpayers, service users and other interested parties. In deciding how to fulfil the duty, who to consult and the form, content and timing of such consultation, the Council must have regard to guidance issued by the Secretary of State. Guidance issued by the Secretary of State confirms that authorities should consider overall value, including economic, environmental and social value, when reviewing service provision. When consulting as part of this duty, the Council should include local voluntary and community organisations and small businesses in such consultation.

5.3 The Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000 set out the responsibilities of the executive and full Council for authorities who, like the Council, operate an executive model of governance. This states that discharging the functions of formulating or preparing prescribed plans or strategies are not to be the sole responsibilities of the executive. For these plans and strategies, adoption of the plan or strategy cannot be a decision of the executive, although steps to formulate and prepare the plan at an earlier stage can be. The prescribed plans include reference to the Best Value Performance Plan, which used to be a legal requirement under the Local Government Act 1999 and was commonly referred to as the Corporate Plan or Council Plan. Many local authorities continue to adopt corporate plans even though the statutory duty to do so is no longer in force. The regulations state that the Council can determine those plans or strategies, whether statutory or not, that should be adopted or approved by full Council. Whilst there is no legal requirement to adopt a corporate plan, Article 4 of the Council's Constitution includes the "5 Year Plan" in its policy framework and it is therefore a function of Full Council to formally adopt the Corporate Plan.

Risk management implications

5.4 The key risk in not refreshing the corporate plan at this time will be an inability to work against a strategic direction and framework for recovery and improvement leading to a sustainable authority for the future.

Environmental Implications

5.5 There are no direct environmental implications as a result of the recommendations contained in this report.

Equality implications

5.6 The Council has a duty contained in section 149 of the Equality Act to have due regard to the need to:

(a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;

(b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;

(c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The protected characteristics are:

- age
- disability;
- gender reassignment;
- pregnancy and maternity;
- race;
- religion or belief;
- sex;
- sexual orientation.

The broad purpose of this duty is to integrate considerations of equality into day-to-day business and to keep them under review in decision making, the design of policies and the delivery of services.

By undertaking public consultation and ensuring that the Corporate Plan is informed by data on Slough's diverse communities, the Council will be able to assess the impact of adopting a new Corporate Plan in relation the duty above. A equality impact assessment will be undertaken and included in the report to Cabinet and Council recommending adoption of a new plan.

Procurement implications

5.6 There are no direct procurement implications as a result of the recommendations contained in this report.

Workforce implications

5.7 There are no direct workforce implications as a result of the recommendations contained in this report.

Property implications

5.8 There are no direct property implications as a result of the recommendations contained in this report.

Background Papers

Doing Right by Slough 2022-2025 [Appendix A - Doing right by Slough - Corporate Plan 2022-2025.pdf](#)