

# Cabinet Report



Report of Head of Policy and Programmes

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Wards affected: All

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To: Scrutiny,

Date: 5 February 2024

To: CABINET

Dates: 9 February 2024

## Vale of White Horse District Council Corporate Plan 2024 to 2028 Approach

### Recommendation for Scrutiny Committee

The committee is asked to review the approach outlined to develop the Corporate Plan 2024 to 2028 and provide feedback or recommendations to Cabinet (meeting on 9 February 2024)

### Recommendation for Cabinet

For Cabinet to endorse the approach to develop the new Corporate Plan 2024 to 2028.

### Purpose of report

1. To seek endorsement from Cabinet on the proposed approach to develop the next corporate plan 2024 to 2028

## **Corporate objectives**

2. A new corporate plan for the period 2024-2028 is required to establish a strategic vision, ambitions and priorities for the council.

## **Background**

3. Vale of White Horse District Council currently has a corporate plan 2020 -2024 that was adopted at full council on 22 October 2020. This is now within its final year so timely to develop a new plan to set the direction for the next 4 years.
4. There are statutory functions and services that a district council must provide. These therefore must feature in any strategic planning through the lifespan of the new corporate plan.
5. The corporate plan should reflect the financial landscape of a council, that sits alongside the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). For the corporate plan to be a credible strategic framework, it can be aspirational and ambitious but it must be affordable and able to be appropriately budgeted for.
6. It is envisaged that the new Corporate Plan will:
  - Establish the strategic direction for Vale of White Horse District Council for the period 2024-2028, informed by Councillors, Strategic Management Team (SMT), service areas, stakeholders and residents.
  - Provide a framework to align council work to priorities, with a recognition that not all identified priorities will be equal in scale and scope.
  - Target resources towards the priorities identified in the plan, aligning projects undertaken by the council to directly contribute to the delivery of the plan.
  - Showcase opportunities that could either be delivered directly, delivered in partnership or could be influenced by the council as appropriate.
  - Lead a hierarchy of plans that highlight how the work of individual officers, teams, service areas and wider partnerships, contribute to overall council performance and progress against its objectives – the golden thread.
  - Increase residents' awareness of services the council provides and its ambitions.
  - Cater to the district's particular needs while maintaining flexibility to respond to new situations as they emerge.
  - Provide a performance monitoring and reporting framework to improve transparency and accountability and report on progress towards our strategic goals and objectives.

## **Approach and draft themes**

7. In August 2023, an all member briefing introducing the current corporate plan and performance reporting framework and initial plans for the development of a new corporate plan was held.
8. In October 2023, Cabinet members and representatives of the Strategic Management Team (SMT) met to review the current corporate plan, evaluate its strengths, areas for development and ideas to improve and inform a future plan.

9. The discussions also began to outline the approach to progress the next Corporate Plan 2024-28. In summary, key milestones of approach is as follows;
- Develop draft themes and illustrative projects
  - Public and stakeholder engagement on the draft themes
  - Analyse the feedback received
  - Develop the draft corporate plan
  - Corporate Plan 2024-2028 adopted by full Council
10. The development of draft themes considered the status of current priorities and projects, contractual commitments, statutory and legal obligations, service delivery and emerging influences and policies.
11. It is proposed that an engagement campaign on the draft themes and illustrative projects is undertaken to receive the views of the public and interested stakeholders. Analysis of the feedback received and further co-productive work would lead to the development of a fully drafted corporate plan. The draft corporate plan would then be subject to usual democratic and scrutiny process before adoption of the final plan by Full Council in October 2024.
12. The proposed draft themes brought forward by Cabinet members to form the basis of new Corporate Plan are set out in the table below.

THEME ONE:	Providing the homes people need
THEME TWO:	Supporting climate and nature recovery
THEME THREE:	Creating healthy, sustainable and inclusive communities
Approaches to achieve the themes	Working responsibly and in partnership
	Supporting thriving local businesses
	Building a council for the future

13. Brief descriptions of each of the draft themes above, including some illustrative current and potential projects are appended to this report at appendix 1.
14. The aim for the final plan when adopted, is to make it more accessible, interactive and be provided in a number of different formats. These will be explored further during the development process.

### **Scope of Engagement**

15. It is proposed to undertake a public and stakeholder engagement campaign for a period of up to 6 weeks following endorsement of the approach.
16. Internal and external engagement on the draft themes of the Corporate Plan 2024-28 will help to:
- Convey the priorities and aspirations of the elected administration
  - Test out the themes and illustrative projects.
  - Better understand and respond to the needs of local people, councillors, officers, businesses and partner organisations.

- Facilitate the district to be better informed about the councils work and encourage participation in local democratic decision making.
- Enable residents to influence their “place” which could harness the increased sense of community spirit and local resilience.
- Increase transparency and be more accountable for what we do.

17. Some examples of audiences to be engaged with include;

- External: residents, businesses, town and parish councils, community groups, seldom heard audiences, younger people, other statutory bodies.
- Internal: Councillors, Climate Emergency Action Committee (CEAC), Council officers.

18. Some examples of proposed engagement activities and channels to be used include;

- An online survey using a new engagement platform
- Community outreach events
- Engaging at venues where groups are likely to meet for example community centres, coffee shops, leisure centres
- Interactive briefing sessions for officers and councillors
- Use of social media to promote the campaign

19. Further details of the audiences, proposed engagement activities and channels to be used are available in the Communications and Engagement Plan - copy to be appended to this report. (Appendix 2)

## **Timeline**

20. An indicative timeline for the development of the plan is setting out key dates and activities are as follows:

- February 2024 – Scrutiny committee review the approach and draft themes
- February 2024 - Cabinet endorse the approach.
- March to April 2024 – Engagement on draft themes.
- May 2024 – Analysis of engagement feedback
- June to August 2024 – Development of the draft corporate plan and accompanying performance measures
- September / October 2024 - Scrutiny Committee meeting to review the full draft plan.
- September / October 2024 - Cabinet meeting to approve corporate plan and recommend to Council.
- October 2024 – Full Council meeting to formally adopt the new Corporate Plan.
- October 2024 – Corporate plan comes into effect.

21. To note, while the new plan is being developed, the annual performance reports for the existing corporate plan will also be completed.

## **Options**

22. It is not a requirement for a council to have a corporate plan however not having one would severely inhibit the council's ability to achieve its strategic objectives and priorities while undertaking its statutory functions delivering essential services for the district.
23. To endorse the proposed approach with recommendations.
24. To not endorse the proposed approach.

## **Financial Implications**

25. There are no immediate financial implications associated with this report but there needs to be recognition that the new plan will sit alongside the MTFP.
26. As the Corporate Plan 2024-28 progresses and gets adopted it is likely that existing resources and budget will need to be redirected and refocused towards the outcomes within it. All future budget proposals will be subject to the usual democratic and scrutiny process.

## **Legal Implications**

27. There are no legal implications arising from this report. Legal implications may arise in respect of individual projects or delivery of services while implementing the Corporate Plan 2024-28.

## **Climate and ecological impact implications**

28. There are no climate and ecological implications arising from this report. It is envisaged the development of the new corporate plan will set the strategic vision and direction for the future delivery of projects and initiatives to address climate and ecological issues and achieve better outcomes, including through a new Climate and Nature Recovery Action Plan.

## **Equalities implications**

29. An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and there are no implications identified. This will be reviewed further with regard to the proposed Engagement and Feedback exercise that will be undertaken.

## **Risks**

30. The Corporate Plan 2024-28 will be a strategic framework that will be underpinned by a series of programmes of work and projects. As the underpinning work progresses, risks will be detailed in individual project risk registers or captured in the corporate risk register and be subject to the usual democratic and scrutiny process.
31. It is speculated that a General Election may be called during 2023/24 quarter 4, which may impact the proposed stakeholder engagement phase of the development of the Corporate Plan 2024-28. The proposed engagement is scheduled to launch ahead of a potential pre-election period but this will be closely monitored by the project team.

## **Other Implications**

32. There are no other implications arising from this report.

## **Conclusion**

33. A new Corporate Plan for the period 2024-2028 is required to establish a strategic vision, ambition and priorities for the council. It is envisaged that the development of this plan will support the alignment of resources to council priorities and increase residents' awareness of the work the council is doing and what the council aims to achieve. An indicative timeline has been set out to illustrate timescales for engagement, development of a draft plan, governance and the adoption of the plan at full Council.
34. A number of draft themes and illustrative projects have been developed by Cabinet Members, informed by SMT, to form the basis of a new Corporate Plan 2024-28.
35. The proposed engagement presents opportunity to be creative and imaginative building on established and emerging techniques that could potentially extend the councils reach and increase participation to co-produce the next corporate plan.

## **Background Papers**