

This Report will be made public on 7 November 2023



Report Number **C/23/55**

To: Cabinet
Date: 15th November 2023
Status: Non key Decision
Responsible Officer: Amandeep Khroud - Assistant Director - Governance, Law & Service Delivery
Cabinet Member: Cllr Tim Prater – Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Governance

**SUBJECT: Creating Tomorrow Together – Corporate Action Plan (2021-24)
Progress Update on Actions**

SUMMARY: This report provides a progress update on work undertaken so far to deliver the high-level actions documented within the Council's Corporate Action plan that covers the three-year period (2021-24). The Council has a key role to play in making the district an even better place to live, work and visit. The action plan is designed to set out how the Council intends to deliver against the three-year priorities defined within the corporate plan to ensure the primary needs of the district and residents are met.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

- To enable the council to monitor progress with the actions in the Corporate Action Plan and to take mitigating measures as necessary.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To receive and note report C/23/55.
2. To note the Corporate Action Plan progress updates set out in Appendix 1.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Council's current corporate plan 'Creating Tomorrow Together' 2021-30 was adopted by Full Council on 24th February 2021 (Report ref: A/20/10). The plan provides a strategic direction to the Council for the nine years from its adoption in 2021 to the end date of 2030 and places a strong emphasis on a series of service priority actions to be delivered within the remaining three-year period to 2024 that will support the district's recovery in the aftermath of the pandemic. The plan was developed with input from a cross-party working group of members and further shaped through public consultation in order to refine the priorities and aspirations for the district over the plan period. Following the election of a new political administration in May 2023, the current Corporate Plan will now be subjected to a review in the next year.
- 1.2 The Corporate Plan is built on four key service ambitions and six guiding principles that underpin the Council's long-term ambitions to ensure resilience and prosperity through the next decade. The service ambitions and their supporting 2030 visions are set out below:

Service Ambition	2030 Vision
Positive Community Leadership	Local leadership in community services will be recognised for the vital contribution in creating a sense of place, health and wellbeing. This will be a shared ambition with partners across our communities. Local leadership will address many of the inequalities that exist between our communities and we will have improved access to services in our most deprived neighbourhoods. A strong and distinctive sense of place will prevail.
A Thriving Environment	We will be recognised as an outstanding place and known as a green exemplar council. Across the district, we will ensure excellent accessible open spaces for all. We will have invested in green infrastructure to enhance our superb natural environment and the council itself will generate net zero carbon emissions.
A Vibrant Economy	Folkestone & Hythe will have a thriving, distinctive and dynamic economy. It will have capitalised on major investment, will have responded positively to the structural challenges facing high streets, and will enjoy a diverse range of economic opportunities in its towns and rural areas. Building on its excellent connectivity it will attract more, higher value employment, driving aspiration and demand for skills.
Quality Homes and Infrastructure	Residents in Folkestone & Hythe will have better access to a wider choice of homes. New development will embrace high standards of sustainability and the district will be delivering planned, high-quality housing with the necessary infrastructure to meet identified need, anchored by an ambitious new Garden Town at Otterpool Park.

- 1.3 The Plan also adopted six Guiding Principles, which would apply to the approach taken by the Council in undertaking its duties and these are:

1. **Sustainable Recovery:** We will do all we can to ensure a strong recovery for the district from the effects of COVID.
2. **Locally Distinctive:** We will protect the special distinctive and diverse nature of our district - working with our key partners to enhance it.
3. **Greener Folkestone & Hythe:** We will encourage and create a more sustainable district consuming fewer natural resources.
4. **Transparent, Stable, Accountable & Accessible:** We will be financially sustainable and communicate effectively with our communities in an accessible way.
5. **Working Effectively with Partners:** We will engage with partners to understand the vital role they play and work collaboratively with them to ensure the best outcomes for our residents.
6. **Continuous Improvement:** We will embed a culture of continuous improvement, seeking feedback and being innovative and creative to find new ways to deliver services.

1.4 To ensure the Council delivers on its long-term strategic direction each of the four service ambitions set out within the plan have a number of priority areas identified within them and these priorities will be the focus of Council activity over the remainder of the three-year period to 2024. A summary of these priorities is set out below:

Creating Tomorrow Together: Corporate Plan 2021-30



1.5 To support delivery of the service ambitions and the three-year priorities, as set out above, a Corporate Action Plan document was developed and formally adopted by Cabinet in October 2021 (report ref: C/21/40). This set out a series of high-level actions that the Council will work towards achieving the service priorities identified for three-year period to 2024. The high-level actions in the plan have identify key milestones, timescales, owners and external stakeholders. The stakeholders highlighted do not represent an exhaustive list and as projects evolve and develop officers will continue to assess appropriate stakeholder engagement.

1.6 In addition to demonstrating the key work the council will undertake to deliver against its identified priorities the Corporate Action Plan also provides a corporate focus for departmental service plans, key

performance indicators and individuals' objectives annually, creating a 'golden thread' throughout the organisation as defined by the Council's Performance Management Framework.

- 1.7 The Corporate Action Plan will continue to be worked upon by officers for the remainder of its term to 2024.

2. Corporate Action Plan – Progress Update

2.1 This report is the second update/review of the high-level actions set out in the action plan since its adoption in October 2021. It should be noted that a number of new factors have emerged outside the remit of the action plan since it was adopted, including the ongoing cost of living crisis, a change in political administration and priorities, financial pressures on council budgets as well as a reduction in staffing resources that have posed an ongoing challenge to the delivery and timescales of the council's agreed priorities.

2.2 The new political administration of the council elected in May 2023 has seen the following key decisions implemented:

- **Princes Parade:** Agreement to the termination of the existing project to deliver a new leisure centre and homes on the site with time now being given to consider the site's future in consultation with residents.
- **Otterpool Park:** Exploring the potential for a joint venture partner to bring third party funding, skills and expertise in order to support the continued delivery of this key strategic project for the council.
- **Increasing transparency and engagement:** The agreement to move from the current cabinet model of decision making to a committee system of decision making by May 2024 with the establishment of a member led Constitution Working Group to support the delivery of the new governance arrangements.

2.3 Action owners have provided their progress updates against the high-level actions assigned to them. This is set out in appendix 1 and provides a partial update. A completed status report cannot be compiled as the work of the action plan continues over the remainder of the three-year period which is due to conclude next year in 2024. A comprehensive review will be carried out after the Action Plan period concludes. All progress documented within appendix 1 should be read in conjunction with quarterly corporate performance reports in order to provide the complete picture of overall performance to date.

2.4 Some of the updated highlights of each theme within the action plan since the last update was reported in October 2022 are set out below.

2.5 The first theme encompasses actions associated with **Positive Community Leadership** as follows:

- i. **Secure a new health centre at FOLCA site:** Heads of Terms with the end user for the new health facility were approved at Cabinet in

September 2021. The detailed floor plan designs have now been completed which set out the allocation of space in the proposed new facility. This now subject to a sign-off process with the Integrated Care Board (ICB). Thereafter the design of building elevations, community engagement and the planning application process will be subject of further consideration of the Council and public engagement.

- ii. **Build and open a new, modern leisure centre at Princes Parade:** This project has now been stopped following the agreement of Cabinet in July 2023 and time will be given to consider the site's future in consultation with residents. Members requested that the site hoarding is removed. The Council will consider next steps in relation to the future of leisure provision. An environmental report was commissioned to understand the implications of removing the hoarding. This has confirmed that the hoarding can be removed subject to a satisfactory fence being erected in its place to prevent access to the site. Method statements have been written to cover the safe removal of the hoarding and erection of the new fence. A tender has been published for the removal of the hoarding and erection of the new fence. Tenders are expected back in late November when a report will be presented to the Leader and portfolio holders for agreement of the associated costs. Following agreement the contract will be awarded and works will commence at the earliest opportunity.
- iii. **Implement the Play Area Strategy:** Work has been continuing to transfer strategic and non-strategic play areas to Town and Parish councils. Two further play areas will soon be transferred to Lyminge Parish Council, which are Meriden Walk and Mount Pleasant. Further work on the proposal of a priority play area at The East Cliff has been stopped following the results from a public consultation on the proposal.
- iv. **Deliver new Coastal Destination Project at Coast Drive in Littlestone:** The project to bring forwards new beach chalets, kiosk, toilets, water sports concession and improved parking is currently at the pre-planning and design stage. Consultants have been employed to carry out environmental surveys, undertake detailed design and structural engineering. A planning application has been submitted. Works are then intended to commence on site in 2024. A temporary facility in the form of two containers for the new watersports concession has been installed on site and a review of the best approach to procure an operator for the kiosk that will be onsite is underway.
- v. **Ensure our staff are appropriately trained:** All staff are now required to complete mandatory safeguarding courses, both child and adult, as well as Prevent. Some bespoke training has been delivered, for example new member training on safeguarding and more is planned. Key staff are further trained on specific courses, including Domestic Abuse, Modern Day Slavery, suicide awareness. Work has also recommenced on creating a new safeguarding website for external use. The intranet is regularly updated with guidance, documentation, etc. The council's safeguarding policy is due for a review in Autumn 2023 and will be taken to Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Full Council.

- vi. **Support vulnerable customers through wider welfare and outreach projects utilising intelligence, appropriate analytics and data to support a wider group of residents with targeted support:** The use of council data by the Welfare Team has enabled the offer of support through additional funds such as Household Support Fund, on behalf of Kent County Council (KCC), Financial Support Payments, Discretionary Housing Payments and Home Essentials Fund (UKSPF):
- Financial Support Payments: Between April and October 2023, the Council have supported 248 households to the value of £111,050 from their Council Tax charges (not Council Tax Reduction).
 - Discretionary Housing Payments: Between April and October 2023, the Council have supported 137 households to the value of £83,810 in support for additional rental related payments (not Housing Benefit).
 - Household Support Fund: Between April and October 2023, the Council have supported 2,680 households with £301,320 of support.
 - Home Essentials Fund: Between April and October 2023, the Council have supported 118 households with £164,776 in support for many items including boilers, beds, mattresses and white goods.
- vii. **Develop a sustainable future for the community hub model of service delivery:** The Hubs are continuing to work across the district to support vulnerable people with ongoing welfare needs including signposting to services, loneliness/isolation befriending calls and dealing with emergency needs, for example food and fuel. The hubs continue to step up when new demands on the organisation arises e.g. Ukraine support / cost of living interventions including UK Shared Prosperity Fund role, distributing items such as slow cookers, heated blankets etc. Provision of warm spaces, distributing vouchers to support people in need, District Food Network involvement etc. The hubs also provide drop in and opportunity in particular for the health sector to engage with specific needs (e.g., encouraging screening, etc.).

2.6 The second theme encompasses actions associated with **A Thriving Environment** as follows:

- i. **Develop a district-wide Climate Strategy:** A draft District-wide Carbon Plan was developed with the support of the Carbon Innovation Lab. This was presented to Cabinet on the 12th of July 2023 seeking approval to go out to public consultation. The first pilot event for community engagement, the Folkestone & Hythe Sustainable Futures Forum facilitated by the Carbon Innovation Lab with support from the council, took place in April 2023 and was successful with positive feedback still being received. Comments on the District-wide Carbon Plan are currently being incorporated with consultation being planned for late autumn 2023.
- ii. **Increase the number of green flag awards for recreational spaces:** A total of four green flags have been retained for the Coastal Park, Royal Military Canal, Radnor Park and Kingsnorth Gardens The securing of

additional green flags for recreational spaces in the district has been put on hold until resourcing allows.

- iii. **Work with Kent County Council to progress the two schemes awarded funding under the Active Travel Part 2 scheme through to implementation:** Construction of the section of the Cinque Ports link at Dymchurch that was awarded funding under tranche 2 has been completed. A second stage of stakeholder consultation to take forward design work on the Cheriton to Folkestone Central scheme (the second scheme awarded funding) was held in July 2023 (led by KCC). Given the interaction between this scheme and the Folkestone: A Brighter Future project, officers are maintaining close dialogue concerning the construction phase of the two schemes to minimise network impacts for all users.
- iv. **Introduce EV charging points to district car parks:** This project completed in Quarter 3 of the 2022/23 year. A total of 103 EV charging points are now fully operational in 26 car parks within the district for residents and visitors to use.
- v. **Roll out Street lighting LED upgrade project:** Phase 1 of converting lighting units has now been completed. 86% of the overall conversion of assets has now taken place, however 14% of phase 2 works have now had to be re-programmed due to UK Power Networks connection issues, delay in getting parts or the need to clear vegetation around the assets. UKPN have stated they require road closures for many of these assets, which will delay things even further. Increased costs are also now expected, which may require a further report to CLT requesting funds. The timescale for completion of this project is therefore expected by end of March 2024.

2.7 The third theme encompasses **A Vibrant Economy** as follows:

- i. **Folkestone Town Centre Place Plan:** The plan setting out the long-term vision for the town centre was completed and approved by Cabinet in September 2021. During January 2023 the council was successfully awarded £19.8m from central Government's Levelling Up Fund. This funding is to be used to deliver the following priority three projects in Folkestone town centre: 1. Station Arrival and Town Centre Connections, 2. Improved Gateway to the Town Centre and Bouverie Square and 3. Folca, Sandgate Road and Town Centre Public Realm.
- ii. **Redevelopment of FOLCA:** The FOLCA building is being considered in two parts (FOLCA 1 and 2). FOLCA 1 continues to be considered for medical provision, internal NHS processes are in action and all stages will be consulted with the Corporate Leadership Team and Members. A part of FOLCA 2 will be considered for relocating the Civic offices, a report will go to CLT/Cabinet in late 2023/early 2024 to decide whether to proceed to the next stage. For the wider mixed-use of FOLCA 2, a specification for the initial works has been developed based on a thorough survey of the building.
- iii. **Improve incubation support for new businesses:** The new Romney Marsh Business Hub (RMBH) was opened in December 2021. As of

September 2023, 12 of the 14 available offices have been leased and are occupied. In relation to the tenant grant support scheme, we have received a total of 7 applications for grants from businesses leasing offices at the RMBH. From these, 5 have been presented to decision panels and have been approved for funding to the value of £38,000.

- iv. **Develop 5,802sqm new employment space at Bigginswood:** Officers had previously been successful in obtaining £1.15M from the Brownfield Release Fund under One Public Estate. The Remediation and development platform works were completed in August 2023. A disposal partner has been approved by Cabinet. Officers are currently working through legal work with completion expected by 31 December 2023.
- v. **Increased support to the self-employed:** The delivery phase of the Folkestone Community led local development (CLLD) programme is now complete. The programme supported a total of 78 potential entrepreneurs to be enterprise ready and 15 new enterprises.
- vi. **Supporting existing business in the district:** For year 2022/23, a total of 49 internal led grant scheme applications were given approval. This comprises of the following:
 - o 13 High Streets Fund applications.
 - o 5 Romney Marsh Business Hub grant scheme applications.
 - o 5 Green Business Grant Scheme applications.
 - o 26 Folkestone Community Works grant schemes.

2.8 The fourth theme encompasses **Quality Homes and Infrastructure** as follows:

- i. **Identify new funding opportunities for the continuation of support services for vulnerable homeless people:** The Council continues to work with local partner agencies to assist people who are rough sleeping in the district, helping them to access accommodation and support services to enable them to move toward a more settled way of life. The local partnership includes Dover District Council, The Rainbow Centre, Porchlight and Serveco. The partnership has successfully secured ongoing funding from the Government to deliver a range of outreach and support services across the Folkestone & Hythe and Dover Districts.
- ii. **Work with partners and agencies to increase the range of housing solutions and support available to rough sleepers, including development of a Housing First Project:** Work on this is ongoing. A total of four units of accommodation with support has been delivered through the Rough Sleeping Initiative, to assist people with a long-term history of rough sleeping. Partnership working is ongoing with the Rainbow Centre to provide the Folkestone Churches Winter Shelter each year, with the Council providing grant assistance to support the project.
- iii. **Increase the supply of affordable homes for rent and low-cost home ownership:** In the 2022/23 year, just over 100 additional affordable homes were delivered by the Council and its partners in the district. Based on the

new affordable homes under construction/acquisition in the district at present (on sites in Folkestone, Sellindge and New Romney), the Council is confident that 80 additional homes will be delivered during 2023/24.

- iv. **Improve the condition of private sector housing across the district:** In 2022-23 a total of 437 private sector homes were improved in the district. A further 125 private sector homes have been improved in the district through intervention by the Council during Quarter 1 2023/24. Under the housing enforcement policy, three civil penalty notices have been issued this year for non-compliance with improvement notices. One is paid (£1,500) and the other two are pending payment (£7,500 each). In 2023/24 to date another 5 penalties have been or are in the process of being served.
- v. **Undertake full stock survey to ascertain current baseline position:** Phase 1 stock condition surveys were completed December 2021 and Phase 2 surveys were completed in March 2022 to establish a baseline position for the HRA housing stock. A draft 30 Year HRA Business Plan is due to be presented to Overview and Scrutiny Committee in November 2023 and will be considered by Cabinet in December 2023. The findings of the stock condition surveys will be incorporated into the plan. The percentage of properties that meet the decent homes standard is monitored monthly and reported quarterly as part of the corporate performance reporting.
- vi. **HRA new build to include new technology that will reduce its carbon footprint and improve management of compliance:** Work to deliver 30 additional council homes for rent and shared ownership on the Highview site in Folkestone will no longer be taken forward by the council acting as the developer following agreement by Cabinet in February 2023 to instead explore the market for the site for its disposal and delivery the scheme via a third party developer.
- vii. **Otterpool Park: Agree framework for the Strategic Land Agreement and Funding Agreements between the Council and the Delivery vehicle:** The Strategic Land Agreement (SLA) is completed. Funding agreements have been drafted and are being reviewed to align with the next steps in relation to delivery of the project.
- viii. **Otterpool Park: Consider the proposed Planning Application:** A revised planning application for the Otterpool Park garden town was taken to Planning Committee in April 2023. Planning committee resolved to grant planning permission subject to the signing of a Section 106 legal agreement.

3. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

3.1 A summary of the perceived risks associated with the report are as follows:

Perceived risk	Seriousness	Likelihood	Preventative action
The Council's High level actions set out	High	Low	The actions have been developed by the departments and in turn

within the action plan are not met.			should inform their service and individual team plans. Monitor progress of the action plan and key performance indicators and take remedial action for those areas where targets and actions are unlikely to be achieved.
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4. LEGAL/FINANCIAL AND OTHER CONTROLS/POLICY MATTERS

4.1 Legal Officer's Comments (NM)

There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

4.2 Finance Officer's Comments (DL)

There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

4.3 Human Resource Officer comments (RB)

There are no direct Human Resources implications emanating from this report. The council's People Strategy has been created in order to support the achievement of the Corporate Action Plan and associated KPIs.

4.4 Diversities and Equalities Implications (GE)

There are no equality and diversity implications directly arising from this report. The report is designed to provide an update on how the council is delivering against three-year priorities documented in the Corporate Action Plan.

4.5 Climate Change Implications (AT)

No direct implications arising from this report. The report provides an update on the Council's performance against the actions set out in the Corporate Action Plan (October 2021). The report does not propose new projects, policies or strategies but provides an update on actions that are already in progress. Some of the environmental projects that the council is currently undertaking are summarised in the report in paragraph 2.6, 'A Thriving Environment', and in Appendix 1, Service Ambition 2, 'A Thriving Environment'.

5. CONTACT OFFICERS AND BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Councillors with any questions arising out of this report should contact the following officer prior to the meeting:

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Appendices:

Appendix 1: Creating Tomorrow Together – Corporate Action Plan (2021-24) Progress Update on Actions