

PART A

Report to: Cabinet
Date of meeting: 7 March 2016
Report of: Managing Director
Title: Development of the council's Corporate Plan 2016-2020 and on the development of the council's vision, priorities and values

1.0 **SUMMARY**

1.1 This report presents the work undertaken to date on reviewing the council's vision, priorities and values and also to develop the Corporate Plan 2016-20.

1.2 The vision, priorities and values set the direction for corporate and service planning and should reflect the current challenges and opportunities facing the council taking into account the Mayor's political objectives, national policy drivers and the requirements of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

1.3 The current vision, priorities and values were approved in 2012. Four years on, the national, regional and local environment in which local authorities operate has changed significantly and the substantial council programme of work established in 2012 has, in the main, been delivered. Therefore, it is timely to have tested the vision, priorities and values to ensure they:

- reflect the council's purpose and direction;
- send a clear message about the organisation including its ambitions and aspirations; and
- capture the council's future challenges and opportunities. The priorities, in particular, should demonstrate what is important to the town, and the organisation, and clearly show what needs to be achieved over the medium term.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Cabinet is asked to:

- 2.1 Note the progress in developing a corporate planning framework that reflects the council's current opportunities and challenges and its future ambitions. This framework includes a new council vision, set of priorities and corporate values and will be articulated through its Corporate Plan 2016-2020.
- 2.2 Note the proposed timescale for the development of the framework and the Corporate Plan 2016-2020 and approval by Council in May 2016.

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Report approved by:

Manny Lewis, Managing Director

3.0 DETAILED PROPOSAL

- 3.1 As part of its business planning cycle, the council undertakes an annual review of its vision, priorities and values to underpin the development of the Corporate Plan. This review ensures the council's corporate planning framework remains relevant to the organisation and is providing an effective framework for both planning key areas of work and the delivery of outcomes.
- 3.2 In 2012 the council approved its current vision, priorities and values as set out below. These have provided the foundation for its corporate planning framework and helped shape the council's direction over the last four years. The framework has ensured that, at both the corporate and service level, the organisation has effectively aligned its priority areas of work and that resources have been focused on the outcomes identified as important to Watford. It has also highlighted areas for improvement, supported employee performance and contributed to staff motivation and job satisfaction (evidenced through recent staff surveys).



- 3.3 Four years on, the council is in a very different place and operating in a different national environment. It has completed a significant programme of transformation, embedded new organisational structures, delivered a substantial work programme, both internally and externally, and progressed a number of key major projects across the town.

Given this, a comprehensive review of its corporate planning framework is timely. A revised vision and set of priorities and values will support the council's next stage of delivery and improvement. They will also be better aligned to its financial planning and the requirement to meet the challenges of the reduction in government grant by 2020.

3.4 **Council vision**

- 3.4.1 All successful organisations have, a clear long-term vision of what they want to achieve. This vision sets out the organisation's direction and guides its actions, whilst making sure that it is constantly striving to improve the services it provides in line with local priorities and financial constraints. Linked to this vision is a defined set of priorities (see 3.5.1 for proposals on revising the council's priorities).
- 3.4.2 The current vision focuses strongly on building pride in the town. This arose from feedback, prior to 2010, that community pride needed to be strengthened and those aspects of the town people felt were important to its identity and sense of place should be acknowledged and celebrated. Since 2012, the aspiration for Watford to weather the storm of the last recession and establish itself as a town with a strong local economy and solid plans for the future has been embedded. It is emerging as a vibrant place where people want to live, visit and do business and the council vision needs to reflect this change of emphasis and direction.

At the same time, the vision needs to acknowledge the vital role strong and cohesive communities play in the town's success.

Therefore, work will progress on refining a vision that is meaningful to Watford now, and as it looks forward, and incorporates the following themes:

- delivering a bold & prosperous future for Watford
- creating a vibrant place where everyone can thrive

3.5 **Corporate priorities**

- 3.5.1 The council's priorities should demonstrate what is important to the town and the organisation and clearly show what the council wants to achieve over the medium term
- 3.5.2 With the change of emphasis for the vision proposed, the priorities also need revision in order to ensure they effectively support its delivery.
- 3.5.3 Going forward, the priorities need to recognise the financial challenges the council faces, given the loss of revenue support grant by 2020 and the changes this will require in how the council funds its spending. Whilst the council will continue to focus on ensuring it is run both effectively and efficiently, it needs to consider broadening its approach and explore appropriate opportunities to allow it to operate more commercially. This will support the need for the organisation to be self sustaining and 'paying our own way'.
- 3.5.4 The council also needs to respond to the changing way people expect to access services and engage with local organisations. The new council website establishes a good platform to take forward this transformation but meeting resident and customer expectations, in both how they access services and the quality of the service delivered, needs to be more clearly defined and reflected in the revised priorities.

3.5.5 Two additional themes will support the council's ambitions for the town. The focus on economic growth over the last four years has secured the delivery of long term projects that will transform the borough and help embed its future success. However, maintaining this momentum remains a priority and one that requires effective communication with our residents so that there is shared understanding and recognition of the benefits delivered through the town's continued prosperity.

3.5.6 A final priority will concentrate on celebrating and enhancing the town's thriving and diverse, active community, recognising the role the council can play in enabling communities to flourish as part of the life of the town.

3.6 **Council values**

3.6.1 Values are important to an organisation as they underpin both behaviours and how services are delivered. They also reinforce the type of organisation the council aims to be and should complement what it has set out to achieve through its vision and priorities.

3.6.2 By establishing a consistent set of organisational values, the council clearly communicates to residents and customers what they can expect when they engage with the organisation across all its service areas. It also establishes a sound framework for staff by setting out how they should manage their behaviours and the approach they should take in both their internal and external relationships.

3.6.3 The 'bold' value has defined much of what the council has achieved over the last four years and has resonated strongly with staff in the work they do and how they approach change and improvements to service delivery.

3.6.4 In view of this, the current thought on developing a new set of values to support the revised vision and priorities is to retain 'bold' but other areas identified for consideration about how we want to work include:

- progressive
- responsive
- acting with integrity
- open
- welcoming
- collaborative
- effective
- caring

3.7 **Corporate Plan 2016-2020**

3.7.1 The Corporate Plan is the council's key improvement and planning document. From the Corporate Plan the council develops its service business plans which, in turn, inform the work programme of each team within the council and the individual objectives of each member of staff, identified through the council's annual performance review process.

3.7.2 The work programme identified in the annual Corporate Plan is considered each year as part of the overall review of the corporate planning framework. As many areas of

work have a medium or long term focus, these are carried forward so that core projects remain priorities for the council. However, the review also provides an opportunity for the inclusion of new projects. This will be particularly apposite for the Corporate Plan 2016-2020 as projects and areas of work that support the delivery of the new council vision and priorities will be included within the corporate work programme.

3.8 Next steps

- 3.8.1 The vision, priorities and values will be refined by April 2016. This includes sharing with staff for their feedback and comment. The Corporate Plan 2016-2020 will then be developed to include core projects and areas of work identified for the organisation in the medium term. This work will be completed at the beginning of the new financial year, with the new Corporate Plan ready for Council approval in May 2016.
- 3.8.2 The revised vision, priorities and values will be supported by a communications plan. This will help ensure they are effectively embedded across the organisation and that our local communities understand, and are kept informed, of the council's progress in delivering the vision and priorities as set out through the Corporate Plan 2016-2020.

4.0 IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Finance

The proposed revisions to the council priorities recognise the need to explore ways the council can meet the challenges set by changes in government funding whilst ensuring it continues to deliver value for money services. Through the Corporate Plan 2016-2020, the council will articulate how it will deliver its vision and priorities and how achieving this will effectively link to the requirements of the Medium Term Financial Plan.

4.2 Legal

The Corporate Plan is one of the policy framework documents listed in the constitution that has to be approved by full Council. The Corporate Plan 2016-2020 will be submitted to Council in May.

4.3 Equalities

- 4.3.1 Developing a vision, priorities and values for the council that underpin its corporate and service planning needs to take into account the Watford context, including an understanding of the demographic make up of the borough's community and feedback from local people on the issues that are important to them. This is to ensure that all elements reflect the borough and its communities. An Equality Impact Analysis will be developed for the Corporate Plan 2016-2020.

4.4 Risks

4.4.1

Potential Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Overall score
The council's Corporate Plan and its Medium Term Financial Strategy work together to achieve outcomes identified within the Plan. Failure to link the two effectively might result in insufficient financial resourcing for areas of work identified or failure to meet financial targets.	1	4	4
The council has acknowledged the importance of the organisation taking ownership of its corporate planning framework to ensure there is commitment to delivery and that targets are achieved. Failure to achieve this 'buy-in' could delay projects and programmes and impact on overall deliver	2	4	8

4.5 Staffing

4.5.1 The corporate plan is a key document for staff. It provides an important part of the council's performance framework and, by ensuring projects and priority areas of work cascade from the plan into service plans and team work programmes, it informs individual staff objectives and outcomes.

The council's values are important for staff as they set expectations in terms of their behaviours, attitudes and approach to their work.

Background papers

- Corporate Plan 2016-2020
- Medium Term Financial Plan