

Minutes

Corporate Policy Development Committee 11th October 2023



Present

Councillors	Present	Councillors	Present
M Ault	No	S Rajeev (Vice-Chairman)	Yes
J Bond	Apologies	M Staines	No
G Courtauld (Chairman)	Yes	B Taylor	Yes
J Edwards	Yes	P Thorogood	Apologies
M Fincken	Yes	E Williams	Yes
J Hayes	Yes	T Williams	Apologies
L Jefferis	Yes		

8 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

INFORMATION: There were no Interests declared.

9 **MINUTES**

DECISION: The Minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Policy Development Committee (the Committee) held on 26th July 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

10 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

INFORMATION: There were no statements made, or questions asked.

11 **CORPORATE STRATEGY 2024/28 DEVELOPMENT**

INFORMATION: The Chairman was pleased to welcome Tracey Headford, Business Solutions Manager, to the meeting. Tracey would be providing a presentation to Members on the development of the Corporate Strategy 2024/28 (the Strategy), which included a timeline of the process through to its publication. Alongside Tracey, the Chairman also welcomed Dan Gascoyne, Chief Executive Officer, to the meeting.

The main points covered within the presentation included a background on the Corporate Strategy and why it came to be, how it was developed, the evidence base, the results of the recent public consultation and the timeline for the Strategy's implementation.

The full presentation and slides may be viewed on the [Council's website](#). A broadcast of the meeting is also available via the Council's [YouTube Channel](#).

Further to the presentation, Members were invited to ask their questions of Tracey

regarding the development of the Corporate Strategy. In response to the questions raised, the following information was provided:-

- The phrase 'empty properties' referred to a combination of factors (e.g. if a property had been bought but still need refurbishing, unsold properties that already been moved out of, properties that were under probate, etc). The Council had appointed an Empty Homes Officer whose role was to review the reasons behind these and to work with local residents to assist them where possible.
- In terms of consultation feedback, there was a multitude of evidence that the Council was required to review as part of the development of the Strategy. It was acknowledged that there had been a low response rate from younger age groups across the District, who tended to be much more difficult for the Council to engage with. It was noted that similar issues around engagement with younger age groups had been experienced at Essex County Council during their residents' surveys.
- Other evidence from local 'Levelling Up' workshops with residents would also be fed into the development of the Strategy. Reference was made to the Members' Development Evening on 18th October 2023 which would provide Members with the opportunity to engage further on the development of the Strategy by feeding back the views of residents from within their own Wards. It is intended that the emerging Strategy would be brought back for consideration by Members at the next scheduled Committee meeting on 30th November 2023.
- There would be recurring themes within the Strategy that underlined how it would be delivered (e.g. through partnership working arrangements, devolution, the sharing of services, etc).
- In response to a query regarding devolution, the Chief Executive was hopeful that the partnership working that Braintree District Council was involved with across North Essex (e.g. North Essex Economic Board) would play a key role in ensuring that there was District level representation for any new deals coming forward.
- A review of the Council's previous Corporate Strategy had taken place a few years after its publication. As a result of the review, slight changes to the previous Strategy were made in order to ensure it encompassed emerging priorities (e.g. sustainability agenda).
- It was suggested that a review of the new Strategy following its publication could form one of the Committee's future recommendations. Any such reviews were expected to be fairly high level with a focus on the actions within the Strategy.
- Although the number of online views could be monitored, it would be difficult to ascertain the overall 'reach' of the Strategy.
- The Chief Executive highlighted that each year, the Council conducted an annual plan process which fed into its service planning processes and subsequently linked in with the overall Strategy.
- The Committee would be notified of any fundamental legislative changes that might impact or contradict the Corporate Strategy. The way in which this was communicated would be dependent on the types of changes coming forward (e.g. through Cabinet papers instead of direct to the Committee).

- Members were assured that officers within the organisation undertook regular monitoring in preparation for national events and the potential impacts on Council services, such as changes in the political landscape.

In response to the questions raised by Members, the following actions were agreed:-

- Tracey Headford, Business Solutions Manager, agreed to circulate the presentation slides to the Members after the meeting.
- Tracey agreed to provide Members with a percentage breakdown between rural and urban residents across the District.

At the end of the debate, Councillor M Fincken put forward a motion which requested that the Committee accepted the presentation as provided and that officers gave consideration to the questions and proposals raised in respect of the Strategy.

On being put to the vote, the Motion was agreed.

DECISION: The Committee considered the contents of the presentation and whether they wished to put forward any recommendations to be considered in the finalisation of the Corporate Strategy 2024/28.

REASON FOR DECISION: To provide Members with an overview of the development of the Corporate Strategy 2024/28 (the Strategy).

12 **PROGRAMME OF WORKS 2023/24**

INFORMATION: Members received a report which provided them with a summary of the Committee's initial work programme, following its agreement at the Cabinet meeting on 25th September 2023. The work programme was intended to be a live document that would be subject to review throughout the year.

DECISION: Members agreed the draft Work Programme for the Committee.

REASON FOR DECISION: To agree the Programme of Works for the Corporate Policy Development Committee for 2023/24, following its presentation at Cabinet.

The meeting commenced at 7.15pm and closed at 8.12pm.

Councillor G Courtauld
(Chairman)