

Report to the Finance, Resources and Partnerships Scrutiny Committee

1st September 2014

Council Plan 2014-16



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Introduction

This report presents the proposed new Council Plan, covering the period 2014-16, to the Finance, Resources & Partnerships Scrutiny Committee (FRAPS).

Following this meeting, the Plan will be presented to Council at its meeting on 17th September 2014.

The attached Council Plan 2014-16 initially covers the period during the 2014-15 financial/municipal year following Annual Council and up to March 2016.

A proposal for the plan was presented to FRAPS at its meeting on 17 June 2014. The latest draft of the Plan was then presented to Cabinet on 23rd July 2014 and will be presented for final adoption at Council on 17 September 2014.

Background

A Council Plan (formerly the Corporate Plan) for Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council was developed for 2013-14 to reflect changes in the political and economic environment and the work undertaken to replace the former Corporate Plan document.

The Council Plan for 2014-16 builds on the previous version of the Plan and has two main sections. The second section details the measures and activities set out in order to monitor the Plan's progress.

The first section includes the vision and corporate priorities for the Borough Council and is outlined here.

The vision/corporate priorities remain unchanged from the previous Plan and are:

- To create a borough that is prosperous, clean, healthy and safe (the vision); and

- A clean, safe and sustainable borough,
- A borough of opportunity,
- A healthy and active community and
- Becoming a co-operative council delivering high quality, community-driven services (the corporate priorities)

Key Areas of Focus

The purpose of the Council Plan is to do the following:

- Provide a strategic policy framework for service and financial planning for 2014-16
- Update the challenges facing the Council (financial and otherwise)
- Set out the key activities of the Council under each priority
- Review whether local need is being addressed by the Council
- Ensure that the Council's various strategies (which feed into the Council Plan) are still relevant and are reflected in the Council Plan
- Develop outcomes that are relevant to the actions and activities of both Borough Council services and the services provided by our key partners (e.g. Police, Fire, County Council)
- Include SMART indicators and well-developed project plans so that key actions can be undertaken and it can be seen when work is completed and when it is not and also to be able to measure progress against identified outcomes

Development of the Plan

The Council Plan has been developed by reviewing its content and layout, taking into consideration information from previous work undertaken and acknowledging the need for the Council to be in a strong position to establish and progress its plans.

The Plan retains the existing vision for the Council - "to create a Borough that is prosperous, clean, healthy and safe" and, as already said, its four priorities.

The Plan also contains a new set of twelve outcomes and activities to measure and monitor the impact of the Council's work (whether alone or in partnership with others) on these outcomes.

The previous version of the Council Plan identified seventeen outcomes which have now been reduced to twelve. The outcomes detailed in the 2014-16 Council plan are:

Priority: A Clean, Safe and Sustainable Borough

Our Borough will be safer

Our Borough will be cleaner

Our Borough will be sustainable

A Borough of Opportunity

Newcastle is a great place to work

Newcastle is a great place to do business

Newcastle is a great place to live

A healthy and active community

Everyone has the chance to live a healthy, independent life

Everyone has access to high quality leisure and cultural facilities/(activities)

Everyone has the opportunity to get involved in their community

Becoming a co-operative council delivering high quality, community-driven services

The council is efficient, open and innovative in its work

Services are designed and delivered co-operatively

Communities are strong and well supported

These outcomes have been identified as meeting the needs of the communities of the Borough.

In addition, the Plan's development will be aided by communication with key stakeholders to ensure that the Plan remains fit for purpose, including the work done by Communications around the annual budget consultation process. Service satisfaction surveys have also been included in the Plan's development.

Timetable for Delivery

The Council Plan has been developed with the involvement of elected Members and officers with the aim of cementing priorities for the current financial year (to accord with approved service plans/budgets). More importantly, the Plan will provide the strategic policy context for the service and financial planning for 2014-16.

In contrast to previous years, a more timely approach is being adopted in terms of production of the Plan to reflect the realities of the municipal/financial year, one which will inform the service and financial planning processes accordingly. Scrutiny of the Plan's development and delivery will also be undertaken throughout the year.

As has been reported previously, therefore, the Council Plan has been developed along the following timetable, thereby presenting opportunities for comments and feedback as part of this process at the outset of the financial year:

- Outline of plan to Finance, Resources & Partnerships Scrutiny Committee presented 17 June 2014
- Draft version for approval from Cabinet 23 July 2014
- Approved version to Finance, Resources & Partnerships Scrutiny Committee 1 Sept 2014
- Cabinet response to Scrutiny comments 10 Sept 2014
- Final version to Council 17 Sept 2014
- Implementation from 1st October 2014

Constraints

One of the main constraints to consider in the development of the Plan for Newcastle Borough Council is that, like other authorities, balancing reductions in funding with the provision of quality services and increases in demand is a major challenge and potentially limits the ability of the Council to deliver against its plans generally.

The financial picture for 2014/15 and how the council plans to deliver identified savings are detailed in the Revenue & Capital Budgets 2014-15 and Medium Term Financial Strategy. These activities will be monitored regularly and considered in service planning and other planned activities to ensure the savings are realised.

By adopting the revised approach the Council will be better able to align resource allocation with the agreed strategic priorities

Outcomes/Conclusions

The Council Plan informs the Council's overall corporate planning and acts as the major impetus behind budget proposals, longer-term strategic plans and also the service planning process.

In many ways, the Council Plan for 2014-16 will be a transitional plan, in that preparation and planning will be undertaken in order to effectively prepare the Council to meet the longer term demands and challenges to service delivery in the borough (as part of the 2020 Vision work).

Faced with the likely financial restraints leading up to 2020, decisions and planning for the next Council Plan (2016 onwards) will commence at the beginning of 2015-16 with a timetable of activities to ensure the council is in a good position to meet expected and unexpected challenges.

Members are asked to consider the Plan and this covering report and recommend that it be adopted by Full Council in September 2014, subject to any suggested changes by FRAPS.

Supporting Information

- NULBC Council Plan 2014-16 (see Appendix 'H')

Relevant Portfolio Holder(s)

Cllr Mike Stubbs, Communications, Policy & Partnerships