

LONDON BOROUGH OF HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM

Report to: Cabinet

Date: 04/12/2023

Subject: H&F Corporate Plan 2023 - 2026: A Stronger, Safer, Kinder Borough for Everyone

Report of: Councillor Rowan Ree, Cabinet Member for Finance and Reform

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Responsible Director: Sukvinder Kalsi, Strategic Director of Finance

SUMMARY

The Hammersmith & Fulham (H&F) Corporate Plan, 'A Stronger, Safer, Kinder Borough for Everyone' (Appendix 1) contains our strategy to deliver the ambitions of the H&F Vision up to 2026, setting out what we want to achieve for our residents. It also reaffirms the Council's long-standing six values that have become firmly fixed in everything that we do.

We want our services to be of the highest quality and inclusive and accessible to all, whilst ensuring that our resources are used efficiently, compliantly with our responsibilities and are supported by good governance. The Corporate Plan ('the Plan') explains how we will continue to transform our services and invest money to help protect high quality essential services for our residents. It restates our commitment to work together with residents, businesses, partners, and our staff to tackle the biggest challenges facing our communities.

The Plan builds on a track record of compassionate and pioneering local government. It continues the Council's journey of reform and improvement, and a history of high-performing services and innovative new initiatives that balance compassion with efficiency. Despite the difficulties and challenges we face by continued cuts in central government funding, our ruthless approach to financial efficiency has enabled us to maintain one of the lowest council tax levels in England, with one of the most generous council tax support schemes in the country.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet:

1. Adopt the H&F Corporate Plan 2023 – 2026 (A Stronger, Safer, Kinder Borough for Everyone) as the overarching strategic plan for the Council.
2. Endorse the approach to report annually to Cabinet on progress against delivery of the Plan.

3. Note that any new council initiatives set out within the Plan will be subject to the normal governance, budget setting and decision-making processes of the Council before they are enacted, as set out in the constitution and relevant legislation.

Wards Affected: All

Our Values	Summary of how this report aligns to the H&F Values
Building shared prosperity	The H&F Corporate Plan is structured around the Council's six values. The Plan seeks to update our ambitions in each of these areas and identify tangible initiatives that will support delivery in each of these areas over the next three years and beyond.
Creating a compassionate council	
Doing things with local residents, not to them	
Being ruthlessly financially efficient	
Taking pride in H&F	
Rising to the challenge of the climate and ecological emergency	

Financial Implications

There are no immediate financial implications resulting from the recommendations within this report. This report requests approval for the Corporate Plan only and does not request specific funding at this time. Funding for the actions set out in the Corporate Plan will be subject to the Council's normal decision-making and budget-setting processes as set out in the Constitution and relevant legislation. Decisions relating to the requirement for any capital or revenue budget allocation will be considered as appropriate through the Council's existing capital and revenue reporting processes, following the completion of further detailed work.

Implications verified by James Newman, Assistant Director, Finance, 30 October 2023.

Legal Implications

There are no immediate legal implications resulting from the recommendations within this report. This report requests approval of the Corporate Plan only. The legal implications of each of the actions set out in the Corporate Plan will be subject to the Council's normal decision-making processes as set out in the Constitution and relevant legislation. As each individual element of the Plan is considered, and a decision is to be made, then legal advice will be given to the decision maker as to the Authority's statutory duties and powers, including the need to give due regard to the Public-Sector Equality Duty.

The local authority has what is known under the Localism Act 2011 (s1(1)) as 'a general power of competence' (previously, the well-being power in the Local Government Act 2000). This enables the Council to act in the interests of the community and in its own financial interest. The Corporate Plan reflects on a diverse range of statutory requirements but is not intended to encapsulate all requirements

placed on the Council, nor is it a substitute for existing statutory documents covered elsewhere by the Council's budget and policy framework.

Implications completed by Angela Hogan, Chief Solicitor, 26 October 2023.

Background Papers Used in Preparing This Report

None.

1. Background

- 1.1. Cabinet adopted the Business Objectives 2022/23 plan in September 2022 which included a commitment to develop a longer-term plan. The adoption of a new Plan for H&F provides an opportunity to re-affirm the Council's existing vision and values. It sets out, in one place, the core aims of the Council relating to our statutory and regulatory responsibilities, but also broader ambitions for the future and what we want to achieve with and for residents.
- 1.2. The Plan provides a clear articulation of what our priorities are, for the benefit of residents, staff, regulators, and partners. It provides a strategic thread that will shape decision-making, the services we provide and when, and inform departmental, service and staff objectives. The Plan has been developed with close reference to, and alignment with, the Council's financial and people strategies. It offers the foundation on which the Council's policy, strategy and funding frameworks will be set and delivery measured, helping to align funding streams and departmental objectives to the Plan's overarching strategic priorities.
- 1.3. The Plan has been developed at a time of national economic deterioration, with high inflation, rising interest rates and record UK government peacetime borrowing having a negative impact on everyone's spending power, including the Council's. This new Plan seeks to balance new ambitions to improve the borough with our continuing commitment to high-quality statutory services. The Plan has been informed by our long-standing ruthless financial management practices, that continues to protect essential statutory services. It also reflects how we will work with residents and staff to respond to major crisis, across climate change, the cost-of-living crisis, and recovery from Covid-19, to create a stronger, safer, kinder borough for everyone.
- 1.4. The future operating environment for local government will continue to be challenging, as central government continues to place more duties on councils without providing the necessary funds needed to deliver added services. Despite the challenges that exist, the Council has continued its strong track record of good financial governance, low council tax, and a balanced budget. The Plan reflects the pioneering new ideas and services that the Administration has adopted in areas we know are important to residents; such as the first of its kind Law Enforcement Team and Industrial Strategy, delivering new affordable homes for local residents, keeping home care free, and helping secure hundreds of homes for refugees in the borough.

2. How the Plan was Developed

- 2.1. The Plan has drawn on existing major policies, strategies and plans co-produced with residents and partners as well as key commitments made in the Administration's 2022 Manifesto.

2.2. The development of the Plan has been led by the Council's Policy and Programme Management Office, working with a cross-departmental working group made up of senior representatives of each department and subject matter experts across finance, human resources, equalities and climate change, among others. The Plan has been shaped by engagement of Cabinet Members and departmental management teams and an all staff consultation, with 61 detailed responses and an all staff briefing, where over 500 staff identified the priorities for the borough.

3. Delivery and Assurance

3.1. Strategic oversight of the delivery of the Plan will be held by the Council's Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) and monitored regularly by the Council's Policy and Programme Management Office. The Plan includes a set of outcomes that describe the changes and improvements we want to achieve. These outcomes will be used as a basis for future reporting against delivery of the Plan on an annual basis to Cabinet. The Council's Policy and Accountability Committees may also oversee and scrutinise the Plan's delivery as required.

4. Design and publication

4.1. In line with our commitment to make H&F the most inclusive borough in the country, the Plan will be published in an accessible web format and be accompanied by a summary document and easy read summary. The document presented at Appendix 1 represents the content only, which will be web designed.

5. Analysis of Options

5.1. The options considered were to produce a new Plan for H&F or not to. The Council recognises that there are significant benefits to having a Plan to guide the strategic operation of the Council and to clearly articulate to residents, partners, staff and regulators the Council's key ambitions. The development of the Plan represents a timely transition from the 2022/23 Business Objectives into a longer-term strategic plan. It also responds to a recommendation of the external auditor to report performance against the Council's strategic objectives to Cabinet.

5.2. The production of a Plan was the preferred option, as opposed to not producing a plan, as it offers an auditable trail of what the Council has committed to and enables all stakeholders to understand the Council's ambitions.

6. Reasons for Decision

6.1. The adoption of the Corporate Plan is an executive function reserved for Cabinet decision making and remains consistent with the Council's budget and policy framework set by Full Council. The full rationale for the decision is set out in this report.

7. Equalities Implications

7.1. An equalities impact assessment has been undertaken alongside development of the Plan. The assessment makes clear that the Plan contributes positively towards tackling inequalities and is consistent with the ambitions of the Council's Equalities Plan. It is not anticipated that there will be any negative impacts on groups that share protected characteristics, under the Equality Act 2010.

- 7.2. Aspects of the Plan that require additional funding or signal a major policy change will be the subject to scrutiny of the equality implications of those proposals in line with the Council's existing decision-making process. Any required decisions will set out equality implications and include Equality Impact Assessments as required.

Implications completed by Matthew Sales, Assistant Director, Programmes, Assurance and Analytics, 23 October 2023.

8. Risk Management Implications

- 8.1. The Corporate Plan contributes positively to the overarching requirements for achieving good governance and in delivering quality services which meet residents' needs. The Plan demonstrates how the Council acts in the Public Interest by setting out clear priorities for delivery through defining intended outcomes in terms of sustainable economic, social and environmental benefits.
- 8.2. As the delivery framework and processes for monitoring and evaluating progress are established, we can understand exactly what goals are being worked towards. This allows us to assess and record progress towards them and as a result we can actively manage both risks and performance through regularly reviewed robust internal controls. This in turn guarantees strong financial management in accordance with the best principles for good governance in the Public Sector. The risk implications of delivering priorities will be assessed as each new decision comes forward.

Implications confirmed by Jules Binney, Risk and Assurance Manager, 26 October 2023.

9. Climate and Ecological Emergency Implications

- 9.1. The Corporate Plan restates the Council's commitment to tackling the climate and ecological emergency and commits positively towards progressing action in a range of areas, including setting high organisational standards and supporting businesses and residents to reduce their environmental impacts. Any new Cabinet decision relevant to the delivery of commitments within the Plan will have the climate and ecological implications assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Implications completed by Jim Cunningham, Climate Policy & Strategy Lead, 30 October 2023.

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – H&F Corporate Plan 2023 - 2026: A Stronger, Safer, Kinder Borough for Everyone

Appendix 2 – Equalities Impact Assessment