

Cabinet - 13 July 2023

Item no. - 10 Matters Referred by Policy Development and Scrutiny Bodies

Feedback to Cabinet following consideration of the draft Corporate Strategy 2023-2027 by the Corporate PDS Panel

1. The Corporate Strategy forms a key part of the council's Policy and Budget Framework, with the Constitution recommending that prior to adoption components of the framework be subject to scrutiny. In response, the Corporate Policy Development and Scrutiny (PDS) Panel met on 11 July 2023 to consider the draft Corporate Strategy 2023-2027.
2. The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Council Priorities and Delivery introduced the draft Strategy to the Panel. PDS members were then given an opportunity to ask questions, from which some of the following themes emerged:

Cost of living challenges

3. Members highlighted the current cost of living challenges faced by many residents and asked whether the Corporate Strategy provided a framework for the council to offer appropriate support and whether our economic policies were accordingly aligned.
4. Reassurance was given that the Corporate Strategy principles committed to tackle inequalities and to protect the most vulnerable across communities. The Cabinet Member highlighted that for some of our population the challenges were generational and there was a need to address these inequalities; the Strategy offered this opportunity.
5. Examples of how the council was already offering support to residents were provided, including the wellbeing hub. In regards alignment with economic policies, the Panel heard that the Strategy prioritised good jobs to improve the local median wage for residents.

Giving residents a bigger say

6. Members questioned the mechanisms and strategies in place to allow residents to have a bigger say.
7. Reassurance was given that this remained one of the council's two key policies. Through examples such as the area forums, consultations, parish liaison there was extensive opportunity for engagement.
8. The draft Strategy included the extended commitment to listen to and work with residents to act on their concerns. The Cabinet Member in response would be exploring new engagement opportunities to help further understand the key issues for local communities. An example of an interactive area forum where attendees were invited to vote was discussed and seen as a good example of innovation.

Providing better jobs

9. The Panel questioned how the Strategy would lead to the creation of good jobs?
10. Members were told that the new Economic Strategy, which will underpin the Corporate Strategy, was developing a new approach to the local economy, addressing the area's strengths and weaknesses, and identifying how BANES will move towards a resilient, sustainable economy with good jobs that increase median wages.

Decision wheel

11. Clarification was requested in relation to the bracketed wording contained within the framework – p7-8.
12. It was confirmed that the council was intending to implement a decision wheel to ensure the Strategy is embedded in all decisions taken across the authority. The decision wheel would include a social and economic foundation, an environmental and ecological ceiling and a middle ring where the council worked with communities. Examples of decision wheels had been seen in other councils across the south west.

The potential impact of external factors

13. The Panel asked whether the council was able to respond to external shocks, such as a potential deepening cost of living crisis and inflationary pressures.
14. Members noted that the council had successfully responded to the pandemic, as an example and had an officer team that was adaptable, and which put the community first. The draft Strategy reemphasised the council's purpose of improving people's lives and this would continue to be the core focus for the authority, in the face of any potential external challenges.
15. It was confirmed that the council extensively modelled against the impact of various inflationary scenarios, including best case and worse case using a traffic light rating.

Resolved

- i) **To thank the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Council Priorities and Delivery for sharing the draft Corporate Strategy 2023-2027 with the policy development and scrutiny function**
- ii) **To ask Cabinet to note the summary of the Corporate PDS meeting held on 11 July 2023**
- iii) **To request that Cabinet continues to engage with PDS on delivery of its Corporate Strategy 2023-2027**

Cllr Robin Moss Chair – Corporate PDS Panel

11.07.2023