



**SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**

**CABINET**

**DATE:** 27 OCTOBER 2020

**REPORT OF:** MR TIM OLIVER, LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

**LEAD OFFICER:** RACHEL CROSSLEY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR STRATEGY AND COMMISSIONING

**SUBJECT:** ORGANISATION STRATEGY REFRESH

**SUMMARY OF ISSUE:**

Surrey, along with the rest of the UK faces an unprecedented future as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, bringing with it both significant challenges, as well as opportunities. The pandemic has fundamentally shifted the strategic context in which we are operating. In September 2020 Cabinet agreed to a strategic reset for the council, with four priority objectives that have emerged through the council's response forming a new focus for our work.

The Organisation Strategy sets out the council's contribution to achieving the aims and ambitions set out in the Community Vision 2030 (the 2030 Vision). Building on the strong foundations put in place over the last two years, the Organisation Strategy has been refreshed, using the lessons learned from our response to the crisis, to reflect how our priorities and strategic approach will need to change to ensure we can deliver the Vision and create better lives, a better place and a county where no-one is left behind.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Cabinet is asked to agree the content of the refreshed Surrey County Council Organisation Strategy and recommend it onto the County Council for approval at its meeting on 8 December 2020.

**REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Through our experience in responding to the Covid-19 pandemic, our interaction with residents and partners, and analysis of the latest data, we are confident that the 2030 Vision remains the right destination for the county. While the broad ambitions outlined remain valid, the way we get there needs to change; a sharper focus on a smaller group of priorities will enable us to more effectively prioritise our resources and activity without losing the strong foundations we've established over the past two years.

We want to use the refreshed Organisation Strategy to reaffirm our commitment to 'no one left behind' in the county and make this the guiding principle underpinning all of our work. The strategy also sets out more clearly our commitments around equality, diversity and inclusion, including setting four new equality objectives.

Alongside the new priority objectives and guiding principle of 'no one left behind', we will continue to deliver the activities and services that contribute towards the ten outcomes set out in the 2030 Vision. The impact of Covid-19 continues to be felt by our communities and

this is likely to continue into the future. The activities outlined in the 'We Will' statements in the strategy reflect not only our contribution to the 2030 Vision, but also how we will support the county in its recovery from the effects of the pandemic.

## DETAILS:

### **Background**

1. This report outlines the changes that have been made to the council's Organisation Strategy in line with the reset of the council's budget and strategic priorities agreed by Cabinet in September 2020.
2. The Organisation Strategy sets out a clear strategic direction for the council and brings together a number of interrelated workstreams including response and recovery to the Covid-19 pandemic, transformation and our Medium Term Financial Strategy alongside day to day activity of our services.
3. The Community Vision for Surrey in 2030 (the 2030 Vision) sets out a shared set of outcomes for the county council, district and borough councils, other public services, businesses and residents to work together towards in order to improve the lives of people who live, work and study in Surrey.
4. The 2030 Vision states that by 2030 we want Surrey to be a uniquely special place where everyone has a great start to life, people live healthy and fulfilling lives, are enabled to achieve their full potential and contribute to their community, and no one is left behind. We want our county's economy to be strong, vibrant and successful and Surrey to be a great place to live, work and learn. A place that capitalises on its location and natural assets, and where communities feel supported and people are able to support each other. Despite the significant impact of Covid-19, the broad ambitions outlined in the 2030 Vision remain valid and should continue to guide our work.

### **Organisation Strategy**

5. The Organisation Strategy has been refreshed to take into account the new context and environment that we are operating in, although a number of the core elements are consistent with the version agreed in October 2019. It continues to outline how our activity will contribute to the 2030 Vision for Surrey, and remains focused on creating better lives, a better place and a county where no-one is left behind.
6. The refreshed Organisation Strategy builds on the work and successes of the past two years that have enabled us to continue to provide high quality services and make efficiencies while at the same time responding to, and leading recovery from, the Covid-19 pandemic.
7. We continue to face financial challenges alongside rising demand for services, a situation that has worsened as a result of Covid-19. Although we have received additional funding from Government, this falls short of what we require to meet the lost income and increased demand that has been brought about by the pandemic. Going forward we will focus on carrying out a smaller number of activities, but in a more effective way.

8. To help us to continue to deliver on the long-term aims for the county, the refreshed strategy emphasises four priority objectives as our new focus. These will help us to meet the more immediate challenges and take advantage of opportunities that have emerged through the response to Covid-19.
9. The four priorities for the refreshed Organisation Strategy are:
- i. Growing a sustainable economy so everyone can benefit**  
Support people and businesses across Surrey to grow during the economic recovery and re-prioritise infrastructure plans to adapt to the changing needs and demands of residents at a time of financial challenges.
  - ii. Tackling health inequality**  
Drive work across the system to reduce widening health inequalities, increasing our focus on addressing mental health and accelerating health and social care integration to reduce demand on services while improving health outcomes for residents.
  - iii. Enabling a greener future**  
Build on behaviour changes and lessons learnt during lockdown to further progress work to tackle environmental challenges, improve air quality and focus on green energy to make sure we achieve our 2030 net zero target.
  - iv. Empowering communities**  
Reinvigorate our relationship with residents, empowering communities to tackle local issues and support one another, while making it easier for everyone to play an active role in the decisions that will shape Surrey's future.
10. Underpinning these priorities are key enablers through which we will continue to transform the council:
- a. Customer experience**  
We will get better at seeing things from a resident's perspective, giving customers a simpler and more consistent experience.
  - b. Stronger partnerships**  
We will focus on building stronger and more effective partnerships with residents, other public services and businesses to collectively meet challenges and take opportunities.
  - c. Transformation and reform**  
We will continue our comprehensive transformation programme to improve outcomes for residents, deliver efficiencies and make sure financial sustainability underpins our approach.
  - d. Financial management**  
We will spend our money in the most efficient and effective ways, so we can have the greatest impact on improving people's quality of life and ensure we provide the best value for money to our residents.
  - e. Agile, diverse and motivated workforce**  
We will embed new agile ways of working and provide staff with the tools and

support to be high performing and outcomes-focussed. We will put equality, diversity and inclusivity at the heart of everything we do, valuing the strength of a diverse workforce.

f. **Digital and Data**

We will embrace digital solutions and take a data-driven approach to transforming our organisation and services we deliver for residents.

**Our guiding principle - tackle inequality in Surrey by focussing on no-one left behind**

11. Evidence tells us that while many residents and businesses thrive in Surrey, not everyone has the same opportunities to flourish so our focus for the next five years will be guided by the principle of tackling inequality and ensuring no-one is left behind. Surrey is an affluent county and this image can often mask the problems that some residents face, such as domestic abuse, homelessness and mental health issues. The impacts of Covid-19 and lockdown measures have widened existing social, economic and health inequalities, with different impacts by age, race, poverty and wealth. We must take action on these inequalities, so that we can stimulate economic recovery and jobs growth and provide support early for some of Surrey's most vulnerable residents.
12. Running through all four of the new priority outcomes in the strategy is a theme of addressing inequality; inequality between places, such as the economic disparity between the east and west of the county, and inequality between and amongst communities, with people's life chances and quality of life affected by a number of factors that drive these disparities.
13. We have reaffirmed our commitment to 'no one left behind' through this refreshed Organisation Strategy, and more clearly emphasised our commitments around equality, diversity and inclusion.
14. For residents this means engaging with them in different ways to ensure all voices are heard, which will help us better understand the drivers of inequality so we can take more effective action. For staff this means creating an environment where people feel comfortable to bring their whole self to work and a place that values difference by embracing people's different perspectives to help tackle the challenges we face.
15. To enhance the prominence of this agenda in our work and demonstrate our compliance with the public sector equality duty, we have identified core actions in the strategy which will form our equality objectives and support us to achieve our ambitions.

**CONSULTATION:**

16. The refresh of the Organisation Strategy has been informed by recent engagement and research that has been carried out with residents and partners over the past several months to understand the impact of Covid-19 and focus our strategy on the areas that are important to residents.
17. This includes a Covid-19 temperature check postal survey carried out in the summer with approximately 2,200 Surrey residents looking at behaviours, attitudes and

opinions during the period of the pandemic. This has given us a statistically representative set of results to help us understand what has happened to our population and how we might plan for future impacts from similar events.

18. We have also undertaken a comprehensive Community Impact Assessment to fully understand the initial impact of Covid-19 on Surrey's communities, particularly for vulnerable populations and places.
19. The refresh of the strategy has also been shaped by the work of the Select Committee Chairmen & Vice-Chairmen's Group with representatives from each of the Select Committees plus the Audit & Governance Committee forming a Task and Finish Group to oversee development of the strategic reset. A report of the findings of this task group went to Cabinet as part of the Strategic Reset item on 29 September 2020. In addition the Select Committee Chairmen & Vice-Chairmen's Group reviewed the updated 'we will' statements to be included in the Organisation Strategy on 2 October 2020.

#### **SECTION 151 OFFICER COMMENTARY**

20. Although significant progress has been made over the last 12 months to improve the council's financial position, the medium-term financial outlook is uncertain. The Public Health crisis has resulted in increased costs which are not fully funded in the current year. With uncertainty about the ongoing impact of this and no clarity on the extent to which both central and local funding sources might be affected from next year onwards, our working assumption is that financial resources will continue to be constrained, as they have been for the majority of the past decade. This places an onus on the council to continue to consider issues of financial sustainability as a priority in order to ensure stable provision of services in the medium term. As such, the Section 151 Officer supports this refresh of the Organisation Strategy and a focus on the four specific priority areas, which will be referenced as part of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

#### **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS – MONITORING OFFICER**

21. The Organisation Strategy contributes to the council's overall governance framework, setting the vision, aims and priorities the council is working towards. There are no further specific legal implications at this stage.

#### **EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY**

22. The council's Equality, Fairness and Respect Strategy 2015 – 2020 was our previous commitment to deliver fair and inclusive services to meet the needs of all Surrey's residents. The strategy focused on supporting independence among vulnerable adults and children; helping all young people to succeed in education, employment and training; reducing health inequalities; and being a local employer of first choice for people from all our diverse communities.
23. As the context we are working in has changed, and issues like the Covid-19 crisis are worsening existing health inequalities and economic insecurity, we need to ensure tackling inequality and leaving no-one behind are at the forefront of everything we do.
24. The refreshed Organisation Strategy strengthens the council's commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion by making this our central guiding principle and setting four new equality objectives around the economy, health, communities and workforce.

25. Agreeing these objectives will enable us to prioritise activity to tackle inequality as well as ensuring the council remains compliant with its legal obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty as set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. The Act requires the council to publish objectives it thinks it needs to achieve to further the aims of the general equality duty, namely to have due regard to the need to:

- “eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.”

26. Progress against these objectives will be tracked and reported annually through the outcomes-based performance framework the council will use to assess and manage its performance.

<b>WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:</b>
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27. If the recommendation is agreed, the next steps are:

- The Organisation Strategy will be presented to the meeting of the County Council on 8 December 2020 for approval
- A draft budget will be presented to Cabinet outlining how the Strategy will be resourced at their meeting on 24 November 2020

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**Contact officer**

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**Consulted**

- Corporate Leadership Team
- Directorate Leadership Teams
- Strategic and Integrated Planning Group (cross council representation)
- Select Committee Chairman

**Annexes**

- Annex A – Surrey County Council Refreshed Organisation Strategy
- Annex B – Surrey County Council Refreshed Organisation Strategy- one page summary