

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

COUNCIL

26TH JULY 2024

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTORS GROUP

Matter for Decision

Wards Affected: All Wards

Corporate Plan 2024/2027: Working towards a more prosperous, fairer and greener NPT

Purpose of Report

1. To present a reset Corporate Plan for 2024/2027. The Plan was presented to Cabinet on 24th July where it was approved and referred to Council for formal adoption.

Background

2. Section 3(2) of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 requires public bodies to:
 - Set and publish well-being objectives that are designed to maximise the Council's contribution to achieving the well-being goals; and
 - Take all reasonable steps (in exercising its functions) to meet those objectives.
3. The above statutory requirement is discharged via the publication of the council's Corporate Plan.
4. The council's current Corporate Plan for 2022/2027 was published in May 2022 and provided a clear framework for the council to recover from the disruption that had occurred during the pandemic period.

5. Since the publication of the Plan in 2022, a lot has changed over the last two years. World events have driven very high levels of inflation and energy prices and compounded the cost of living crisis that has pushed many more of our residents and businesses into financial hardship. Supply chain disruptions arising from Brexit have affected contract prices and delivery timescales. We have seen structural changes in the labour market making it more difficult to attract and retain a sufficient workforce.
6. Across our services we are seeing an increase in demand. More people seeking help from social services; more people presenting as homeless; and more children needing extra help in school and in travelling to school.
7. However, the funding made available by the UK and Welsh governments for these functions in the last two years has fallen significantly short of what is needed to respond to our communities.
8. We have secured a large amount of investment funding under the UK Government's Levelling Up agenda to help regenerate our communities.
9. In addition, there are major projects that have the potential to grow a large number of sustainable jobs into future years, including the Freeport status for the port of Port Talbot.
10. The announcement by Tata Steel UK Ltd of a decarbonisation programme that will see the end of traditional steel making at Port Talbot, and a move to new technologies, adds a further strategic dimension to this landscape.

Looking Forward – Working towards a more prosperous, fairer and greener NPT

11. In light of this new context we are working within, the priorities contained within the Corporate Plan have been reset.
12. The council's four well-being objectives, set in 2022, are unchanged and remain our focus for 2024/2027.
13. As part of the reset, a set of strategic priorities have been identified which form corporate transformation programmes. There are 9

programmes which will support the delivery of the four well-being objectives and many of the actions contained in those programmes are essential to service and financial sustainability going forward.

14. In addition to the transformation programmes, all services and functions will contribute to the four well-being objectives through service planning and performance management arrangements at the operational level.
15. Members will see elsewhere on this agenda that the financial context for future years is extremely challenging. Welsh Government have indicated that there will be no uplift to the Revenue Support Grant for 2025/2026 and there is the prospect also of a reduction in the capital grant. At a time when there are significant inflationary pressures still in the system and very high and increasing levels of demand and risk across the organisation, the 2025/2026 budget gap is forecast to be circa £20 million. It is unclear whether the incoming Labour Government will provide any additional funding to Welsh Government to mitigate against this. Should no additional funding be available, it will be essential that all nine transformation programmes are accelerated and that the council urgently identifies other measures that can be taken to reduce the net revenue budget requirement and to mitigate risks.
16. The focus on financial sustainability and ensuring statutory duties are discharged may cause a delay in delivering some of the other outcomes identified in the corporate plan or require a further revision of Plan priorities in due course. Update reports will be provided to members as and when necessary.

Engagement

17. During the summer of 2023, the Let's Talk engagement exercise that was undertaken in 2021/2022 was repeated to ensure we had a good understanding of what matters to people now and to have an insight about what had changed in people's lives since the original exercise was undertaken back in 2021/2022.
18. During the initial Let's Talk campaign, it was clear that the main focus for our residents, community organisations and businesses was to

keep friends, family and customers safe whilst restrictions continued to ease. Whilst these are still important to people, when asked “what matters to you for the future” in the 2023 Let’s Keep Talking campaign the responses included protecting our local economy, our environment and health and well-being. This feedback has been used in developing the priorities set out in the reset Corporate Plan.

Feedback from Members

19. It is to be noted that the Corporate Plan draft presented to Council, is the version circulated to Members as at 18th July 2024. Due to timings of democratic arrangements, a member’s seminar, the Community, Finance and Strategic Leadership Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet have taken place following this circulation. As a result of the member’s seminar a minor change has been made in order to reflect comments prior to publishing the final version. This amendment does not change the content of the Plan.

Performance Measures

20. As part of the reset a number of performance measures contained within the Corporate Plan reflect the progress of the strategic priorities within the transformation programmes.

Financial Appraisal

21. In resetting the Corporate Plan, account has been taken of any budget savings/financial impacts, as part of the council’s budget setting and planning process for 2024/2025 and invest to save proposals approved by Members for a number of the transformation programmes. These have been incorporated into revenue and capital budgets for the financial year. As indicated above, the Plan must be considered within an uncertain and volatile external environment and consequently Plan priorities will need to be adjusted as the revenue and capital budgets become more certain.

Integrated Impact Assessment

21. A first stage impact assessment has been undertaken to assist the council in discharging its legislative duties (under the Equality Act 2010, the Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015, the

Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. The first stage impact assessment has indicated that a more in-depth assessment was required. It is essential that Members read the full Integrated Impact Assessment, which is attached at Appendix 2 for the purposes of the meeting.

Valleys Communities Impact

22. The reset Corporate Plan 2024/2027 contains initiatives to support valley communities across the county borough.

Workforce Impact

21. The council's Strategic Workforce Plan links to and supports the strategic priorities set out in the Corporate Plan, by identifying what the workforce needs to look like and how it needs to operate to deliver outcomes for the residents of Neath Port Talbot. The Plan helps provide the direction and to ensure that we have the right people, with the right skills and attitudes, in the right place and at the right level.

Legal Impact

22. The publication of the Corporate Plan will meet the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 by detailing the steps that we will take to achieve our four well-being objectives. Our well-being objectives show how the council contributes to the social, economic, cultural and environmental well-being of Neath Port Talbot and to the seven national well-being goals contained within the Act.

Risk Management

23. The council's Strategic Risk Register will be updated with any risks associated with the delivery of the work outlined in the Corporate Plan.

Consultation

24. There is no requirement under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 to consult on this reset plan as there has been no change to the well-being objectives. Many of the proposals within the Plan have already been subject to individual public consultation processes and those elements of the Plan that are at early stages of development will be subject to consultation as required.

Recommendations

22. It is recommendation that:
 - i. Council adopt the Corporate Plan for the period 2024/2027, but note the priorities will need to be subject to ongoing review given the level of uncertainty in terms of available revenue and capital resources provided by Government. The Director of Strategy & Corporate Services is given delegated authority in consultation with the Leader, Deputy Leader and Chief Executive to make any further changes that are necessary prior to final publication and which do not materially change the content of the Plan.

Reason for Proposed Decision

25. To meet legal duties set out in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 as they relate to council corporate planning activities.

Implementation of Decision

23. The decision is proposed for immediate implementation.

Appendices

24. Appendix 1 – Corporate Plan 2024/2027: Working towards a more prosperous, fairer and greener NPT
25. Appendix 2 – Integrated Impact Assessment

List of Background Papers

26. Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015

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