

Planning Policy and Economic Development Service Plan, Rachel Raynaud

Synopsis of report:

This report provides a summary of this year's Service Area Plan for Planning Policy and Economic Development for approval. The full proposed Service Area Plans can be found in the appendix.

Recommendation(s):

- i) Members approve the 2023/24 Service Area Plan for Planning Policy and Economic Development; and**
- ii) Members note any General Fund business cases requiring growth are subject to approval by Corporate Management Committee (or full Council depending on sums).**

1 Context and background of report

- 1.1 The annual business planning cycle for 2023/24 commenced with each Corporate Head of Service submitting any planned activity for the next Financial Year which requires growth.
- 1.2 In addition, in conjunction with the relevant Service Chair and Chair of Member Working Party, priority areas arising from Corporate Strategies have been agreed for the 2023/24 MWP work programme. These form the majority of the Service area's planned activity for 2023/24.
- 1.3 Business cases for growth items have then been prepared either as outline documents (further refinement and more detailed exploratory work is required during 23/24 before a full business case can be developed), or final business cases. Final business cases will need to be approved by Corporate Management Committee prior to release of any funds, therefore reports will be submitted for approval during 23/24 where at this stage, only outline business cases can be provided.
- 1.4 Subsequent to review of growth bids, Service Area Plans have been further developed to include planned activity that does not require growth, a Mission Statement to document a narrative of the service area's current position and its direction of travel over the lifecycle of the Corporate Business Plan, and a summary of each of the teams that form the service area and their business-as-usual activity and key statistics.
- 1.5 To ensure a 'golden thread' between Service Area Plans and team and individual plans, Corporate Heads of Service will use the planned activity to set team and individual objectives for 23/24.
- 1.6 Any projects identified as part of planned activity will be added to the project portfolio for 2023/24 and progress monitored and reported on a Quarterly basis to Corporate Management Committee as per the project management methodology.

- 1.7 The final non-corporate Service Area Plans go to their relevant service committee for approval first. A final approval is then sought from Corporate Management Committee approving the Corporate Action Plan (which is an amalgamation of all the plans for the year). In addition, Corporate Management Committee is also asked to approve any business cases requiring General Fund growth because growth cannot be approved by a service committee with the exception of HRA expenditure up to £100,000 which can be approved by the Housing Committee. Any growth exceeding £250,000 will require the approval of full Council.

2 Report

- 2.1 The full Planning Policy and Economic Development Service Area Plan can be found in the Appendix A. A summary is provided below.

2.2 Service Area Mission Statement

- 2.3 Over the last year, the business unit has successfully adopted outstanding Supplementary Planning Documents, progressed work on the Local Plan review (although this was stalled to allow for consideration of emerging Government policy), assisted with delivery of other Corporate priorities (including the Council's response to climate change and assisting with the Magna Square launch event), commenced delivery of the Economic Development Strategy (including sourcing funding for the Runnymede Youth Hub and capacity building in the Borough's three town centres), signed an MOU with Government over delivery of the Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan, and worked with partners on strategic projects including the CPO Inquiry for the A320.

- 2.4 The planning policy team has recently been expanded to incorporate the Council's Corporate Climate Change function, with direct reporting by the Local Plans Manager to the Chief Executive. This expansion will enable the business unit to deliver on its mission to provide a key strategy and policy making unit to drive the Council's Corporate agenda.

- 2.5 A number of new appointments have been made to the Planning Policy and Economic Development Business unit over the last year. These appointments have strengthened the resilience and experience of the team, which is now well placed to react to changes and support delivery of the following service area priorities:

1. To fulfil the Council's statutory duties with respect to the development of planning policy to guide decision making within the Borough, in particular:
 - Publication of a Local Development Scheme (Local Plan timetable)
 - Delivery of the Runnymede 2030 Local Plan review and CIL review (or new proposed Infrastructure Levy)
 - Publication of the Annual Monitoring Report and other required reporting which is necessary to support the Planning Policy and Climate Change functions
 - Provision of support to Neighbourhood Fora on delivery of Neighbourhood Plans

2. To participate on behalf of Runnymede's residents and businesses in existing and future National Strategic Infrastructure Projects, including the River Thames Scheme.
3. To participate in the Heathrow Strategic Planning Group, and other strategic planning initiatives where appropriate.
4. To work with other business units and external partners in preparing and implementing strategy for protection of the Borough's key environmental assets as well as the Council's transition to Net Zero.
5. To work with partners to support delivery of improvements to transport infrastructure in the Borough, in particular delivery of the A320 works and improvements to support active travel.
6. To deliver on the six priority areas identified in the Economic Development Strategy, including the outcomes in the Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan.
7. To complete a review of the Runnymede Economic Assessment
8. To participate in the EZ3 Programme Steering Group with the EM3 LEP, Surrey County Council and other partners to support the successful delivery of the Enterprise Zone at Longcross.

2.6 Key challenges/opportunities and drivers for change including:

1. To adapt and respond to a changing legislative and national policy agenda, ensuring local planning policy and guidance accords with new legislation and future changes to national planning policy and changes resulting from the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill.
2. To adopt and respond to increasing requirements to digitalise the Planning System, including future digitalisation and communication of Local Plans.
3. To overcome increasing budget constraints, in particular capital funds to deliver infrastructure and urban realm improvements by successfully sourcing the most effective grant funding opportunities to aid project delivery.
4. Ensuring projects are evidence base driven by the effective use and interrogation of data and utilisation of new technology where appropriate to monitor change.
5. Achieving local community buy-in to enable effective project delivery.
6. The need for increasing and effective joint working with other business units and external shareholders, including further cooperation between the five boroughs in NW Surrey on economic development initiatives.

3 Policy framework implications

3.4 This Plan supports the delivery of the Corporate Business Plan.

3.5 Specifically, those actions arising from Corporate Strategies that will be addressed in delivering the Service Plan can be seen in the Planned Activity list in the Appendix, described as CBP Strategy Action in the Type of Initiative column.

4 Resource implications

4.1 To support key new areas of work within the service area plan in 2023/24, the following proposed initiatives require growth to be able to be delivered:

- £43,000 to support delivery of the Local Plan review. Underspend in 2022/23 will be used to provide for this budget.
- £20,000 to support delivery of two Neighbourhood Plans required to cover the costs of two Examinations in 2023/24, (£10,000 is budgeted in the following year to cover costs for a third Neighbourhood Plan Examination). The Council will receive a retrospective grant to cover these costs after the Examinations are completed)
- Up to £70,000/annum to enable recruitment of a transport planner to assist with the LCWIP and other transport schemes.
- £56,000 to support delivery of the Business Growth and Innovation Hub. This will be funded via SPF.
- £30,000 to support delivery of town centre events and markets.
- £20,000 to support delivery of feasibility designs for Chertsey Town Centre urban realm improvements.
- £10,000 to support other economic development activity

4.2 The budget growth request to support the delivery of the Local Plan review is based on continuing the current paused workplan to produce evidence for the Local Plan review. If proposed changes to the NPPF and guidance are implemented, a revised Local Development Scheme (LDS) for the Local Plan review will be considered at Planning Committee. This revised LDS is likely to reduce the growth required for the planning policy budget, however any surplus is likely to be required to fund climate change initiatives during 2023/24.

4.3 Provisional budgets for these schemes have been incorporated into the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and budgets will be released upon committee approval for the schemes to progress. A business case for the business support scheme has been drafted and will be considered by Corporate Management Committee.

5 Legal implications

5.1 Preparation/review of contracts for various projects will be required. Legal implications associated with the actions contained in the service plan for 2023/24 will be regularly assessed as the proposals are developed.

6 Equality implications

6.1 The Council has a Public Sector Duty under the Equalities Act 2010 (as amended) to have due regard to the need to:

- a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment or victimisation;
- b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a Protected Characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- c) Foster good relations between those who share a relevant characteristic and persons who do not share those characteristics;

6.2 The activities to be delivered within the service plan, will have a positive impact overall on persons who share protected characteristics, for instance through employment support for young people, provision of inclusive events which bring together the Borough's communities and development of policy to assist different groups, such as the delivery of affordable housing and provision for gypsies and travellers.

7 Environmental/Sustainability/Biodiversity implications

7.1 The Service Area plan includes work to address issues related to climate change and sustainability, including proposals to improve active and sustainable travel (including progression of phase 2 of the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan), work on air quality modelling, production of a Green and Blue Infrastructure Corporate Strategy and further work on an environmental Supplementary Planning Document.

8. Conclusions

8.1 This report summarises the service area plan for planning policy and economic development and sets out required growth to enable delivery. It is recommended that:

- i) Members approve the 2023/24 Service Area Plan for Planning Policy and Economic Development.
- ii) Members note any General Fund business cases requiring growth are subject to approval by Corporate Management Committee (or full Council depending on sums).

(To resolve)

Background papers

Planning Policy and Economic Development Service Area Plan