

Agenda item 7 (Report from Scrutiny - Draft Corporate Strategy) for Cabinet - Thursday 19 December 2019

7. Scrutiny Committee Reports (Pages 3 - 8)

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To: Cabinet
Date: 19 December 2019
Report of: Scrutiny Committee
Title of Report: Draft Corporate Strategy 2020 - 2024

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To present Scrutiny Committee recommendations concerning the draft Corporate Strategy 2020 - 24
Key decision:	Yes
Scrutiny Lead Member:	Councillor Andrew Gant, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Susan Brown, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Partnerships
Corporate Priority:	All
Policy Framework:	Yes
Recommendation: That the Cabinet states whether it agrees or disagrees with the recommendations in the body of this report.	

Appendices
None

Introduction and overview

1. At its meeting on 17 December 2019, the Scrutiny Committee considered the report concerning the Corporate Strategy 2020 - 24.
2. The Panel would like to thank Councillor Susan Brown, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Partnerships, for attending the meeting to answer questions. The Committee would also like to thank Mish Tullar,

Head of Corporate Policy, Partnerships and Communications for compiling the report and supporting the meeting.

Summary and recommendation

3. The Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Partnerships, Councillor Susan Brown, introduced the report
4. The draft Strategy had already been informed by prior informal consultation and Members had already had an opportunity to contribute to the draft. It was important that this strategy should be slimmer than its predecessor so that people could swiftly see and understand its key elements, via its 4 aims and 5 themes. Central to the strategy's implementation would be the annual bespoke business plans which would flow from and elucidate it, replacing the annual reports previously made.
5. In response to the report presented the Committee suggested a number of specific amendments, which are detailed below.
6. The Committee makes one recommendation.

Specific Amendments

7. A number of areas of challenge were raised, which were not endorsed by the Committee.
8. It was suggested that a change proposed to the way the Council reported on its progress against the Strategic Plan should seek to ensure that members of the public were brought on board, and that the move from annual reports against the four-year Strategic Plan to reporting against bespoke annual plans would benefit from greater explanation.
9. Whilst originally it was suggested that tackling inequality should be considered a theme in its own right, it was recognised that the stated aims of the Council in the draft strategy all were facets of an overarching theme to address inequality and 'build a world class city for everyone.' Nevertheless, it was felt that because tackling inequality is such a pervasive underpinning to the activity of the Council that it was necessary to review the actions it was undertaking to do with an 'inequality lens' so as to provide greater emphasis.
10. It was recognised by all present that the way the Council refers to those it seeks to serve through its activity is highly illustrative of its perceptions of the nature of its relationship with those people. Residents, citizens and customers were recognised to be valid synonyms, but the validity of their usage would be context dependent and misuse might project an inaccurate impression of the Council's standpoint.
11. Recognising the importance of partnership working as a theme permeating the way the Council works, it was suggested that the Council's investment and innovation in developing ways to realise its ambitions to create an inclusive economy, that fuller

realisation would be achieved through the adoption of similar principles by other local partners.

12. A significant achievement of the Council was recognised to be the manner in which it had involved citizens within its decision making, most notably though certainly not exclusively through holding the UK's first Citizen's Assembly in response to declaring a Climate Emergency. It was suggested that recognition should be given in the Strategy to the Council's position as a national leader in this area, and that having achieved such status that the Council should seek to maintain its level of participation by residents.
13. Finally, it was recognised that the Council holds a singular approach to the way it outworks its aims. The Council's commitment to in-housing and investment to ensure a workforce capable of delivering quality outcomes for customers and residents in commercial and non-commercial spheres, and recycling the returns from its commercial work for the benefit of residents, the 'Oxford Model', was deemed to be so unique and proactive an approach that residents should be made aware of it.
14. On the basis of the above, it is the view of the Committee that the following amendments would bring greater clarity to readers and draw out a number of the Council's fundamental objectives and values:

Recommendation 1: That Council makes the following amendments to its draft Corporate Strategy:

- i) **Clarify to readers the difference between and reasons for changing from the existing reporting system to the use of bespoke business plans**
- ii) **Increase the emphasis on the drive to reduce inequalities which underpins the actions within the strategy**
- iii) **Review the suitability of references to residents, customers and citizens within their specific contexts**
- iv) **Add the following outcome to the Partner section of the Inclusive Economy Outcomes table: 'More local organisations adopt practices which support an inclusive economy and recognise the social value implications of their business decisions.'**
- v) **Reference the Council's success in engaging its residents in policy-making and its commitment to continuing to do so**
- vi) **Include reference to the 'Oxford model'**

Other issues

15. The following is included for completeness and does not include views that were endorsed by the Committee.
16. Unadopted areas of challenge to the report were raised around whether greater reference should be made to the Council's zero carbon ambitions, the progress of the Council in decarbonising its buildings, and potential ambiguity about the meaning of 'growth'.

17. Challenge was also raised over whether the Council's commitment to being 'efficient and effective' had lessened in light of it being dropped as an aim. However, the replacement of one aim with five key, explanatory themes was supported as a clearer way of explaining the Council's intended aims and methods.

Further Consideration

18. The Committee's work plan has scheduled consideration of the final draft of the Corporate Strategy at its meeting on 04 February, and consideration of the Council's business plan for 2020-21 at its meeting on 04 March. It is anticipated that future business plans will also be included within the Committee's work plans in future years.

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Cabinet response to recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee made on 17/12/2019 concerning Corporate Strategy 2020 - 24

A verbal response will be provided by the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Partnerships, Councillor Susan Brown

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Agree?</i>	<i>Comment</i>
<p>Recommendation 1: That Council makes the following amendments to its draft Corporate Strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Clarify to readers the difference between and reasons for changing from the existing reporting system to the use of bespoke business plans ii) Increase the emphasis on the drive to reduce inequalities which underpins the actions within the strategy iii) Review the suitability of references to residents, customers and citizens within their specific contexts iv) Add the following outcome to the Partner section of the Inclusive Economy Outcomes table: ‘Local organisations adopt practices which support an inclusive economy and recognise the social value implications of their business decisions.’ v) Reference the Council’s success in engaging its residents in policy-making and its commitment to continuing to do so vi) Include reference to the ‘Oxford model’ 		

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