



## Adoption of refreshed Corporate Strategy 2020-2024 and Covid-19 Recovery Update

<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	The Corporate Strategy 2020-2024 creates a set of Corporate priorities for the next 4 years.
<b>Relevant Ward Member(s):</b>	All
<b>Date of consultation with Ward Member(s):</b>	N/A
<b>Exempt Information:</b>	No

### 1 Summary

- 1.1 In February 2020, the Council approved a new Corporate Strategy 2020-2024, just prior to the national lockdown and the start of the Covid-19 crisis. Since then the Council has led the local response and initial recovery, and has reviewed and reflected upon the implications for our strategy. In this context, this report provides a summary of the coronavirus response to date and sets out the proposed updated Corporate Strategy 2020-2024 for approval. The strategy sets out the Council's Mission, Vision, Values, and refreshed Priorities and Key Actions for the coming 4 years. It has been developed taking into account the current and anticipated challenges facing the Council and the community and draws upon evidence, including the results from the Residents' Survey and public consultation.

### 2 Recommendation(s)

**That Council:**

- 1. Approves the updated Corporate Strategy as attached at Appendix A.**
- 2. Notes the ongoing impact of Covid-19 and the actions the Council is taking as a result.**

### 3 Reason for Recommendations

- 3.1 To set the strategic direction of the Council for the next four years and to establish a set of affordable corporate priorities which provide clarity and focus at a time of ongoing significant financial pressures.
- 3.2 The new strategy seeks to find a balance between affordability and ambition; a balance between investing in core services and new initiatives and has been updated to factor in the ongoing impacts of Covid-19.

### 4 Background

- 4.1 The Council approved a new Corporate Strategy for the period 2020 to 2024 in February 2020 alongside setting a balanced budget for the 2020/21 financial year. The aim of this strategy was to set the strategic direction of the Council for the next four years and to establish a set of affordable corporate priorities which provide clarity and focus at a time of ongoing significant financial pressures. The development of the strategy followed wide ranging community engagement.
- 4.2 The impact of the Covid-19 crisis prevented the strategy being publically launched. As the Council has responded to the crisis and developed its strategy for recovery, it was appropriate and necessary to reconsider the Corporate Strategy and what amendments may be required to ensure it appropriately captures future actions and focus required as a result.

### 5 Main Considerations

- 5.1 The implications and impact of Covid-19 on our communities and businesses are and will be significant. To facilitate a comprehensive review of the Corporate Strategy, members and officers have worked through the impact both alongside the Scrutiny Committee and more broadly through strategic development sessions with all Members. Whilst it has been agreed that many of the original priorities and focus remain appropriate, the Corporate Strategy has now been updated to reflect the changing needs and the Council's response to Covid-19. The refreshed strategy document is attached at Appendix A.
- 5.2 Following the national lockdown, as government guidance allowed restrictions to ease, the Council moved to getting services restarted. Alongside this the Council has undertaken impact assessments and established recovery plans in relation to the following themes:
- Place, Town Centre and Economy
  - People and Communities
  - Environment and Infrastructure
  - Melton Borough Council as an organisation

These themes and the associated assessment have informed the development of the updated strategy.

- 5.3 The key changes to the original strategy arising from the Covid-19 pandemic are as follows:

**Greater emphasis on supporting the impacts on the community within Priority 1:** It is anticipated there will be increases in unemployment and financial, mental wellbeing and physical health needs. The Council had already made commitments to refocus and integrate the way it provides support to residents in need and the learning from the success of the Community Support hub will be incorporated into any new approach.

**Greater emphasis on finding more sustainable solutions to homelessness and temporary accommodation:** The Council's commitment to improve council homes and landlord services remains unchanged but now includes an additional focus on utilising existing and new stock to provide better temporary accommodation for those who need it.

**Reaffirmation of delivering inclusive growth:** The Covid-19 crisis has exacerbated inequalities and made them more pronounced. The Council's commitment to inclusive growth, aligned with the government's levelling up agenda, has never been more important. The strategy retains the clear commitment to deliver a number of key priorities; including the Manufacturing Zones, using our assets for housing, securing a sustainable future for the Melton Sports Village and lobbying for a second GP surgery. It also refocuses activity on supporting the town centre recovery and refocussing the rural pub scheme to support the wider hospitality and farming sector; so affected by the current situation.

**Sustain the environmental benefits:** Despite the huge challenges of lockdown, an unintended benefit was the reduction in carbon emissions and improvements in air quality. Despite the easing of restrictions, many continue to work from home and traffic levels and resultant pollution have not returned to pre-lockdown levels. There is an opportunity to reinforce and sustain increased utilisation of sustainable transport like cycling and the other existing commitments within the strategy.

**Adapting to the 'new normal' with a new organisational operating model:** Over the last six months the Council has had to reshape its operations to deliver many services remotely. The priorities within the 'Great Council' section have therefore changed to recognise that whilst face to face interactions will always be important there is a greater need to ensure the necessary support and infrastructure is in place to meet enhanced homeworking. This includes the need to respond to the different requirements for the associated ICT infrastructure, as well as taking into account changing customer expectations. Supporting these new areas of focus, the refreshed strategy also recognises the need to secure the Council's future financial sustainability in an even more challenging context. The Council's commitment to increase our community focus remains, but has been enhanced to solidify and intensify the tremendous community response and connections made through the crisis. It is hoped the Council can strike a new 'deal' to fundamentally reset how we work with and support those we serve.

- 5.4 The strategy is supported by a fuller list of management actions and a suite of performance measures is also being developed to monitor performance and achievement of the actions and priorities set out in the strategy. These will be reported to Cabinet on a regular basis.
- 5.5 Recognising the current situation remains dynamic the Council will keep the strategy under regular review and this will be supported through the recent establishment of the Scrutiny Recovery task and finish groups for People and Place who will be meeting regularly over the next six months.
- 5.6 A summary of some key actions and interventions undertaken by the Council in relation to the Covid-19 response is listed below:
- In implementing the governments Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant fund and Small Business grant fund alongside a subsequent Discretionary grant fund, £11.086m was paid to 1025 local businesses;

- Supported local Businesses by applying the government funded Retail discount and Nursey discount to over 350 eligible business rates accounts. With revised bills subsequently having been issued to those businesses;
- Nearly 3,000 food parcels and 200 prescriptions delivered by the Community Support hub volunteers;
- Worked with the local fire service to identify vulnerable tenants calling into the hub in relation to mental health and fire safety concerns. The fire service undertook a secondary triage with these individuals and offered further wraparound support. We were asked to share this good practice with other local authorities (not restricted to Leicestershire) and Chief Housing Officers Group;
- The Borough of Melton was recognised as one of the top 5 areas in the country for the proportion of NHS volunteer responders deployed;
- Melton have deployed 90% of the Borough's volunteers registered with Voluntary Action Leicester (VAL); the highest in the County. The volunteers were originally facilitated by the Community Hub with a handover to Voluntary Action Leicestershire (VAL) after VAL mobilised their site;
- The Council's community efforts were cited by the Local Government Association as best practice for Community Hubs and were also featured on BBC East Midlands Today;
- 20 remote meetings held sustaining the democratic process (Over 1000 YouTube views);
- Maintained strong communications both internally and externally with approx. 93k visits to our Covid-19 web pages ,over 200 social media messages and specific communications to staff through a dedicated "Lockdown Lowdown" newsletter;
- Supported the community with specific advice and support with 3442 Covid-19 calls handled and 1166 on line support requests dealt with;
- Processed 319 new claims for local council tax and housing benefit support in addition to applying 1393 accounts with additional government funded council tax support totalling £196,695.38;
- Provided an enhanced level of financial monitoring to ensure the financial impact of Covid-19 could be contained within the councils revenue budget and available reserves including the submission of numerous monitoring reports to central government tracking expenditure, lost income and the timely and accurate application of business and individual grant support;
- Provided direct financial support and worked alongside the leisure contractor to ensure Melton's leisure facilities were one of the first to open across the country/county;
- Ensured the town centre was up and ready for business post lockdown with 2m social distancing tape deployed over 2 kilometres of the town centre and town ambassadors available to support visitors over the initial days post lockdown;
- Barriers were erected from Market Place to Sage Cross Street to allow extra social distancing space for pedestrians. This was particularly useful where the railings from Market Place to Windsor Street restrict social distancing in a space where there were also queues for some businesses like The Yorkshire Trading Company. Also undertook regular disinfecting and increased cleansing of town centre touch points;
- Led on the reopening of the night time economy alongside partner agencies, ensuring a safe and welcoming environment for visitors;

- Health and safety has been a priority for the Council with suitable PPE being provided to front line and other officers in line with the Government Guidance to enable them to continue supporting the community and businesses during the pandemic;
- Continued weekly doorstep waste collections throughout the lockdown period;
- Provided ongoing temporary accommodation to over 40 individuals at risk of rough sleeping due to the pandemic;
- Worked closely with LCC and Radis to ensure the effective safeguarding of vulnerable tenants at Gretton Court;
- Provided enhanced assurance over systems, processes and payments made to minimise the risk of fraud and irregularity at a time when the risk of fraud is at an enhanced level;
- Facilitated enhanced homeworking through reconfiguring IT equipment for home use where this was not previously the case for some users and dealt with a significant increase in calls to the ICT helpdesk with 380 additional calls being dealt with between March and August 2020;
- Alongside responding to the pandemic the Council was also able to deliver the launch of the new customer engagement platform and CRM system with IEG4. The Council also completed the Masterplanning of Melton South to support the development of new homes and infrastructure.

## **6 Options Considered**

- 6.1 To continue with the Corporate Strategy as approved in February 2020. This is not recommended as it would not adequately reflect the actions identified through the Covid recovery and limit the Council's ability to meet the changing needs arising as a result.

## **7 Consultation**

- 7.1 The original strategy was subject to significant consultation with staff at all levels, it was led and driven by the Cabinet and all Members had the opportunity to feed in through a strategic development day. Prior to its approval at Council in February 2020 it was considered by the Scrutiny committee.
- 7.2 A Residents' Survey was undertaken during June/July 2019 and this was used to inform the development of the original strategy. The data will also be used to provide a baseline to measure improvement during the delivery of the strategy. The survey was based on the Local Government Association Survey (to allow a comparison to be made on a national basis).
- 7.3 A consultation on the original Corporate Strategy themes, the key investment decisions needed to deliver the Strategy and some of the difficult decisions that need to be taken – including increasing car park charges was undertaken between 16 December 2019 and end 6 January 2020.
- 7.4 In developing the revised Corporate Strategy there has been extensive consultation with members including a Strategic Development session with all members followed by a specific Scrutiny meeting. Staff representatives were engaged through the Joint Staff Working Group. Partners and other stakeholders were engaged through the specific remote meetings held with them.

- 7.5 A Staff Survey has also been undertaken to further develop the organisational aspects of the Covid recovery to assess the workforce needs that should be considered and met as the council moves forward to implementation.

## **8 Next Steps – Implementation and Communication**

- 8.1 Following approval a formal launch will be commenced. The establishment of a visually appealing version of the strategy will be published online and in print, and promoted through multiple media channels and circulated to key personnel, partners and businesses. A social media campaign is in place which is supported by a video that has been produced to support the communication with the wider community. Different versions of the video are available to support the longevity of the campaign.
- 8.2 Internally the message will be cascaded to colleagues through team meetings and a range of visual materials so the new priorities are easily understood. The areas of focus will form part of the appraisal process for all employees which will be rolled out before the end of the year. It is intended to build up a portfolio of “stories” showing how the priorities have been met through the positive work of colleague in order to celebrate success and reinforce the mission, vision and values.
- 8.3 A set of performance measures at a service and corporate level is being developed which will assist with monitoring and tracking delivery of the strategy and the performance of services. Corporate measures will be reported to Cabinet regularly and published twice a year to the website.

## **9 Financial Implications**

- 9.1 The detailed Financial Implications related to the delivery of the original Corporate Strategy were assessed and incorporated into the revenue and capital budget proposals and medium term financial strategy presented to Council in February 2020. Since that time the budget for 2020/21 has been significantly affected by covid. The budget is being regularly tracked and monitored and as further impact arises is being incorporated into the latest position. The process for producing the budget for 2021/22 and the updated Medium Term Financial Strategy will commence shortly and the impact of the corporate strategy on this and later years alongside the ongoing impact of covid will be considered and incorporated.

**Financial Implications reviewed by: Director for Corporate Services**

## **10 Legal and Governance Implications**

- 10.1 The Corporate Strategy forms part of the Budget and Policy Framework and therefore must be approved by Council.

**Legal Implications reviewed by: Director for Governance and Regulatory Services**

## **11 Equality and Safeguarding Implications**

An equality impact assessment was considered for the original strategy and this has been updated to take into account the updated version.

## **12 Community Safety Implications**

- 12.1 The Residents’ Survey identified some concerns within communities especially around anti-social behaviour and these concerns are being addressed through the new Corporate Strategy priority themes and the establishment of a Housing and Communities

Directorate, investment in the new structure and the Housing Improvement Plan which will increase the Council’s capability to support communities and improve safety.

### 13 Environmental and Climate Change Implications

13.1 The Corporate Strategy contains a specific priority relating to environmental and climate change implications “To protect our climate and enhance our rural natural environment”. Through the delivery of the specific actions sitting underneath this priority this should have a positive impact on this area.

### 14 Other Implications (where significant)

14.1 There are no other implications

### 15 Risk & Mitigation

Risk No	Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Risk
1	Corporate Strategy priorities are not delivered.	Low	Critical	Medium Risk
2	Council is unable to finance key investments required within the strategy.	High	Critical	High Risk
3	Change of Government put new responsibilities/ direction on Local Government not considered within the new Strategy.	Very Low	Critical	Medium Risk

		Impact / Consequences			
		Negligible	Marginal	Critical	Catastrophic
Likelihood	Score/ definition	1	2	3	4
	6 Very High				
	5 High			2	
	4 Significant				
	3 Low			1	
	2 Very Low			3	
	1 Almost impossible				

<b>Risk No</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>
<b>1</b>	A new organisational structure has been put in place to deliver the new Strategy. Performance Measures are being developed to monitor performance, Portfolio Holders and Lead Directors will monitor progress, and Programme Boards will monitor ongoing progress.
<b>2</b>	Regular budget monitoring. Areas of financing already identified in some areas. Regular monitoring of the Strategy will identify early interventions required however the outcome of the fair funding review and the final implications of covid on the council's finances will have a significant impact which is currently unknown.
<b>3</b>	Work with new MP and partners across Leicestershire to mitigate any new responsibilities/direction identified

## **16 Background Papers**

16.1 [Corporate strategy report to Council 26.2.20 \(Minute CO64\)](#)

## **17 Appendices**

17.1 Appendix A Corporate Strategy

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