

Extract from the draft minutes of the Scrutiny Panel meeting of 20 July 2021

306. Year End April 2020 – March 2021 Report; 2020-23 Strategic Plan Action Plan

The Panel considered a report providing details of progress in delivering against the Council's Strategic Plan for 2020-2023 at the end of 2020-2021. Richard Block, Assistant Director, Corporate and Improvement Services, introduced the report and emphasised that the report demonstrated an incredible amount of progress and delivery against all strategic plan priorities. There was considerable evidence of recovery from the Covid 19 pandemic. It was emphasised that the Action Plan reported on the priorities for the last municipal year, and priorities for the current year were dealt with elsewhere on the agenda.

A member of the Panel sought clarification on the breakdown of the figures for affordable homes delivered by the Council in 2020-21.

In discussion, a member of the Panel queried how far the Climate Emergency declaration was embedded in the Strategic Plan and Action Plan, citing that when he had tried to call in a Portfolio Holder decision on the purchase of caged tipper vehicles on the grounds that the vehicles being purchased were not sustainable electric vehicles, he had been advised that the decision was not contrary to the Strategic Plan Action Plan.

In response it was stressed that "Tackling the Climate Challenge and Leading Sustainability" was the first priority in the Strategic Plan and the report provided considerable detail of achievements which addressed that priority. In addition, there had been a number of factors that had influenced the decision on the purchase of the tipper vehicles, including that the purchase of electric vehicles would have required a significant capital investment in the depot at Shrub End, and there had been a long term commitment to the purchase of electric vehicles.

The Panel emphasised the importance of pressing ahead with projects supporting this priority, such as wilding, and delivering new initiatives such as the collection of film and plastics as recyclable material. The Panel considered that there was a need to focus in particular on the communication with residents on these issues. For example, some residents were unhappy with the policies on wilding and unmown areas and there was a need for clear communications to explain these policies so residents understood the reasons behind them. This should lead to increased buy in and support for such policies.

It was suggested that in line with the priority of Creating Safe Healthy and Active Communities, there would be merit in the Panel exploring the Council's policies and procedures on allotments as there seemed to be confusion as to the number of plots that were free. Allotments had proved to be a particularly valuable resource for

residents during lockdown. It was agreed that the that the Portfolio Holder should be invited to provide a response to the Panel on how the current allotment provision and policies aligned with Strategic Plan objectives of wellbeing. If the Panel had further queries, it could consider adding the issue to its work programme.

RESOLVED that:--

(a) The progress in delivering against the Council Strategic Plan at the end of 2020-21 be noted.

(b) The Portfolio Holder for Communities be invited to provide information to the Panel on how the current allotment provision and policies aligned with Strategic Plan objectives of wellbeing.

RECOMMENDED to CABINET that it raise the profile of communications on environmental and sustainability issues.