

SUBJECT: Corporate Plan Annual Report 2020/21

MEETING: County Council

DATE: 23rd September 2021

DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: All

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To seek Council approval of the Corporate Plan Annual Report 2020/21.
- 1.2 To ensure that members have a clear understanding of progress made against the aspirations within the Corporate Plan and the subsequent 'plan on a page' documents which have provided clear direction and accountability during the different stages of the pandemic.

2. RECOMMENDATION:

- 2.1 That the Corporate Plan Annual Report 2020/21 be approved.

3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 The Corporate Plan sets an ambitious five-year programme aligned to a clear purpose of building sustainable and resilient communities. The plan provides direction to ensure all our services are pulling in the same direction to achieve this common purpose. Over the past 18 months our long term plan has been supplemented by a series of shorter-term Coronavirus Strategies, sometimes referred to as the 'Plan on a Page'. This has helped ensure clarity and accountability during the different stages of the pandemic and contains a purpose, strategic aims and associated actions. The Annual Report covers the Corporate Plan and some of the key activity delivered as part of these interim strategies.
- 3.2 The challenges of the past 18 months have been unprecedented and we have been tested like never before. Safeguarding our most vulnerable residents, working alongside the incredible volunteers within our county, providing vital contact tracing services to minimise the spread of the vaccine and supporting our local businesses have been at the core of our activity as we have navigated through the ever-changing environment of the Coronavirus pandemic.
- 3.3 Progress against each of the five priority goals in the Corporate Plan, which also serve as the Council's well-being objectives, is described in this annual report. Under each goal sits a number of programmes of work, twenty-two in total. The updates covered include:
 - Extensive work undertaken to provide education, support and activities for our children and young people. This includes the digital and blended learning advancements in our schools; the innovative ways of ensuring support for those children and their families who needed it, from family support meetings in gardens, to remote Monmouthshire Youth Council events to give young people the opportunity to talk; and finally, the provision of outdoor play sessions and MonLife activity hubs during the school holidays, and a summer play-scheme to provide additional support for children with disabilities.
 - The numerous projects supported in Monmouth and Caldicot to improve the active travel offer in the county, and the total investment of £1.4m made in the last financial year
 - Support and co-ordination of the efforts of the county's many volunteers, including the development of the Connect Monmouthshire networking platform that will offer more

opportunity for people to support each other within their communities building connections and improving quality of life.

- The refurbishment of Abergavenny Town Hall, housing the library, community hub and tourist information into an accessible space in the heart of the town.

3.4 Alongside these, the annual report also highlights activity delivered under the various iterations of the coronavirus strategy. The council has continued to rise to the challenge by adapting, innovating and establishing new ways of delivering services that support residents and businesses, assists community activity and supports staff well-being. These have run concurrently with our Corporate Plan aspirations and, with limited resources, there has been a conscious trade-off between these two plans. The pandemic has also resulted in learning that will provide a lasting legacy, at a rate of change that we have not seen before. Work will be ongoing throughout the year to capture this learning to ensure it is embedded and built upon.

3.5 Some of the activity undertaken against the coronavirus strategic aims include:

- The provision of childcare for vulnerable learners and the children of key workers during the first lockdown via childcare hubs. At their peak, the hubs provided childcare for over 400 pupils in a day. Special Needs Resources Bases remained open, and a weekly multi-agency Stable Lives and Brighter Futures meeting was established to discuss and review support and provision for vulnerable pupils.
- A vast digital overhaul of our working practices to reinstate the decision making process, resulting in the first virtual meeting of Cabinet just six weeks after lockdown, making Monmouthshire County Council one of the first in the Wales to do so. Council meetings followed, and by July, all committees were meeting remotely to ensure robust scrutiny and decision-making.
- Supporting businesses throughout the year to help them through the challenges and uncertainty of the pandemic, issuing over 6,500 payments of grants amounting to almost £40 million.
- The innovative and creative destination marketing programme that continued throughout the year, despite the huge impact on tourism in the county, alongside the work to make our towns COVID-19 safe when we were able to welcome visitors.

3.6 The Annual Report also provides a wider evaluation of the council's arrangements over this period in line with requirements under the Well-being of Future Generations Act and Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009. The Corporate Plan is an ambitious five year programme; some commitments focus on the longer-term future of the county and aim to address complex challenges, in line with the Future Generations Act.

3.7 There continues to be uncertainty in understanding fully the well-being impacts of the pandemic, particularly in the longer term, and the long-term outcome for public finances. It is likely that there will be a need to revisit some of the aspirations in the Corporate Plan to reflect the latest evidence on well-being in the county and financial impact.

3.8 The Annual Report is a public document and should be accessible to a wide audience. The plan will be published by 31st October 2021 on the council's website, alongside a shorter summary version.

4. EQUALITY AND FUTURE GENERATIONS EVALUATION (INCLUDES SOCIAL JUSTICE, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING):

4.1 This report is an evaluation of previous commitments and is not seeking a decision that would have an impact on these areas. The progress the council has made on the Well-being of Future Generations Act, equalities, social justice, and safeguarding is set out in the report.

5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

- 5.1 The annual report is an evaluation of previous commitments and is not seeking a decision on a future policy direction. The report provides an analysis, using a range of information, on the council's performance in 2020/21. The structure of the report has been informed by the legislation it is required to meet, including expectations for and feedback on annual reports by the Future Generations Commissioner.

6. EVALUATION CRITERIA

- 6.1 The report provides a comprehensive analysis of the performance of the council in 2020/21 using a range of performance information and evidence. Some adjustments have been made to the annual report to take account of the disruption to processes caused by efforts being focused on the response to the coronavirus pandemic. Significant effort has been made by all services to facilitate as full an update of performance as possible in the annual report.

7. REASONS:

- 7.1 To ensure that the council can be held to account for performance and can demonstrate progress towards delivering better outcomes for citizens.
- 7.2 To comply with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act and Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 8.1 None. This report is a review of performance in 2020/21.

9. CONSULTEES:

Strategic Leadership Team

Cabinet

Scrutiny of progress against each of the objectives in the plan has also been scrutinised by the council's select committees.

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Corporate Plan 2017 – 2022, 'A Monmouthshire that works for everyone'

11. AUTHOR:

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