

From: Eric Hotson, Cabinet Member for Corporate and Democratic Services
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To: Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee, 13th June 2019

Subject: Strategic Delivery Plan Review

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway: Corporate Management Team (14.05.19)

Future Pathway: None

Summary: The Strategic Delivery Plan (SDP) was initiated in October 2018 and approved by Corporate Board in April 2019. A review has been undertaken to examine the strengths and challenges of the SDP process, in order to inform recommended actions for the 2020-23 business planning round, as part of an annually refreshed rolling plan.

Recommendation(s): Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee is asked to:

(1) **Endorse** the Strategic Delivery Plan Review recommended actions (Table 1).

1. Background

- 1.1 The Strategic Delivery Plan (SDP) defines the most significant activity for Kent County Council, bringing this together in a whole council plan to drive accountability for delivery. This was a substantial change to the business planning framework for the Council and required extensive engagement with services, Corporate Management Team (CMT), Cabinet Members and Non-Executive Members. Therefore, whilst we want to build on success, there are lessons learned to refine and improve the process for the next iteration of the SDP.
- 1.2 The review was undertaken from April to May 2019, using themes to consider different elements of the SDP process, including:
- Engagement
 - Outcomes
 - Data Quality
 - Systems
 - Prioritisation
 - Products
 - Monitoring

- 1.3 The review aimed to *enhance* the existing SDP process, not fundamentally change the approach. There has been strong support from both officers and Members for the SDP, so it is important that we now progress a rolling plan with a medium-term focus. As such, now the SDP process is well understood and established, some aspects of the approach, such as engagement and systems, can be more proportionate and targeted.
- 1.4 The vast majority of activity within the SDP is currently being delivered and whilst an updated position on progress will need to be reflected for 2020-23, we anticipate the 80:20 rule will apply in that most important activity will continue, with some new activity emerging (e.g. driven by new legislative or policy change, or to respond to new financial imperatives) or will be successfully delivered and close during this financial year.
- 1.5 The emphasis has therefore changed from development to delivery. The review recommendations will ensure the SDP process as productive and efficient as possible, informed by a robust SDP monitoring process to examine delivery risk and assurance we are on track to deliver the most significant activity for the Council successfully.

2. The SDP Review Methodology

- 2.1 The review was undertaken with 12 interviews with officers and Members who were engaged in the SDP process, to capture strengths and challenges from different stakeholder perspectives across the review themes. There was also informal engagement via a short online survey using Microsoft Teams, targeted at officers who submitted information to the SDP process to highlight potential solutions from a 'user' perspective. The interview feedback was balanced with a desk-based exercise to capture systems improvements from the Strategy, Policy, Relationship and Corporate Assurance division, who led the process.
- 2.2 The review included input from:
 - Cabinet Members – the Executive is responsible for the business planning framework for the Council
 - CMT – providing both a strategic and service perspective
 - Elected Members – including Cabinet Committee Chairs and Opposition Group Leaders
 - Officers – including Finance, Corporate Equalities Lead and Portfolio Management Offices (PMO's).

3. The SDP Review Findings

- 3.1 The key strengths and challenges for each review theme are set out below. The recommended actions are set in **Table 1** in Section 4.

Engagement

- 3.2 For the SDP to be credible and effective, it is important that there is quality, meaningful engagement with all stakeholders. The plan was built 'bottom up' through extensive engagement, including officer briefings (all Directors, Challenger, Extended CMT and CMT), 97 officers through Microsoft Teams, Cabinet Member briefings, Political Group briefings and all Cabinet Committees. The review cited proactive officer and CMT/Cabinet Member engagement as a real strength of the SDP, in comparison to previous siloed business planning approaches. However, the timing and approach for Non-Executive Member engagement was highlighted as an area for improvement.
- 3.3 Whilst business planning remains a function of the Executive, as a Member led authority the review highlighted a need for earlier engagement with all Members, to invite discussion right at the start of the process on what is important from a resident/community perspective. These views could be factored into service's SDP submissions and support CMT and Cabinet's prioritisation choices. On balance, the majority of those interviewed felt this would add more value as a strategic, informal cross-party discussion to take a whole council view in September, rather than formal, individual Cabinet Committee discussions, which some felt put pressure on the latter stages of the process, focused debate on a more narrow selection of activity within the remit of the committee, and meant duplication for Members who sit on multiple Cabinet Committees. There were also suggestions to have an informal member group or consideration of important commissioning activity at Commissioning Advisory Board (CAB). Most Members interviewed during the review felt a more informal approach would strengthen engagement in the business planning process and encourage collective discussion, not just between Members, but also to enhance a positive working relationship between Members and officers.
- 3.4 Cabinet Member and CMT engagement was valuable to create strong, collective ownership of the SDP, but should be more proportionate in the next business planning round, now the process is well established.
- 3.5 From an officer perspective, engagement from Finance Business Partners in the Autumn was felt to be critical to support services to define accurate financial information in their SDP form submission and support better alignment with the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). CMT felt it will be necessary to have a more joined-up officer view before services submit their SDP activities, for example testing activities from a service, commissioning, budget and corporate demand perspective. CMT also felt it was important that services are clear on what corporate support is required to deliver successfully, and to use SDP guidance notes to challenge expectations and assumptions about corporate capacity for delivery.

Outcomes

- 3.6 The activity in the SDP is designed to improve the Strategic Statement outcomes for residents, businesses and communities. As a Strategic Commissioning Authority more of our activity involves integrated and collaborative working between services, partners and providers to deliver shared outcomes. The

review felt the outcomes were important to connect SDP delivery to clear objectives we want to achieve for Kent's residents and communities.

- 3.7 The outcomes provide a logical structure for the SDP; however, the review found the current outcomes are too broad and siloed around specific services. The current Strategic Statement structure means some important cross-cutting quality of life themes (e.g. protecting the environment) were under-emphasised in prioritisation. Both officers and Members suggested a simpler set of outward looking objectives, focused on what's important from a resident perspective, could support SDP prioritisation in the future. Members felt this was important to drive accountability with officers for delivery and improve the culture of working collectively together across the Council.

Data Quality

- 3.8 Officers used an online Microsoft form to directly submit information to the SDP process, in a structured format which made it quicker and easier to collect and analyse a vast amount of data across Directorates. The review found that the quality of information initially submitted by services was variable, therefore services should take greater ownership and responsibility for data quality.
- 3.9 Those interviewed felt the most challenging issue was the quality of financial data, with gaps in completeness, accuracy and alignment with the MTFP. There were discrepancies in the way financial information was provided, which resulted in edits being made late in the process, so earlier collaboration with Finance Business Partners is required. The review suggested refining the type of financial information we ask for in the next SDP round, with a review of financial information in late January once the draft budget proposals are published, as project costs and savings may fluctuate over time, to avoid last minute changes. Better quality financial data would support effective prioritisation to ensure we target resources wisely and improve the alignment between financial and corporate strategy.
- 3.10 There was strong support for keeping the SDP form as straightforward as possible, but the review identified some helpful suggestions for additional detail about milestones and decision-making stages to add value to the SDP monitoring by focusing on delivery risk. Some Cabinet Members suggested that it would be useful to understand more background about why activities were happening (e.g. responding to legislative change, external funding opportunity) to inform prioritisation decisions.

Systems

- 3.11 The Microsoft 365 capability was a critical success factor in the SDP. These tools helped to support a more efficient and productive process by automating key tasks, saving hundreds of staff hours in comparison to previous business planning approaches.
- 3.12 The review found Microsoft Teams was a more productive and efficient way to engage staff but requires further cultural change to make this an interactive engagement hub, not just a mechanism for information cascade. The next SDP round could further exploit the potential of Office 365 tools to collate, manage

and analyse data in a quicker, more meaningful way, further reducing time spent on administrative tasks. This would create a live 'single version of the truth' for SDP information and provide more effective analysis of corporate demand.

Prioritisation

- 3.13 The prioritisation of a long list to a short list of activity, informed by the Decision Environment Complexity Analysis (DECA) tool, was particularly important given the Council's capacity and resource constraints. The DECA tool helped to identify a 'league table' for prioritisation discussions, which the review found worked well to maintain a whole council view and consider activity objectively and consistently. Cabinet Members felt the detailed SDP packs provided the right level of information to inform prioritisation decisions, however they would like more time to consider the detail and engage with individual Corporate Directors to enable a more strategic, collective prioritisation discussion.
- 3.14 Both CMT and Cabinet Members interviewed during the review felt that services could support prioritisation by consolidating activity which is delivered and managed as a programme (e.g. capital programmes) or by taking a more strategic view of inter-related activity (e.g. service activity that supports the Kent Environment Strategy). Some Cabinet Members felt this would help to achieve a more focused 'shorter list', as 79 activities still represents a significant capacity issue for the Council. It was suggested it would be useful to know if activity funding was time-limited, as this would inform Cabinet prioritisation decisions. Non-Executive Members felt it was important to reflect resident priorities in SDP prioritisation.
- 3.15 It was suggested that Extended CMT (all Directors) could support prioritisation by taking a strategic whole council view to provide challenge on cross-cutting projects and appropriate resources and capacity. CMT members felt confident that now they were familiar with the process, services would be more discerning about what activity to include which would avoid too much 'business as usual' activity in the 'long list'.
- 3.16 The DECA criteria could be tailored for the SDP, for example refining the strategic importance criteria to ensure the resident perspective is considered in the next round. There was also a suggestion to use DECA to consider similar types of activity together (e.g. it is more difficult to compare a £500m capital programme to the development of a single strategy).

Products

- 3.17 The SDP process involved creating two products – a full plan with detailed activity scorecards and a summary document. The review found a single product to take a whole council view added value, however customised packs of information for Cabinet Members may be useful. The majority felt that a light touch narrative was an improvement on previous business planning products, but most would like to avoid jargon and acronyms. There are further opportunities to simplify the SDP in communications to staff and present an 'Strategic Delivery Plan on a page', which could support the Staff Survey objectives. Member feedback included the opportunity for Members to use the SDP to promote policy activity within their communities.

Monitoring

- 3.18 It is important that we monitor SDP activity to provide assurance we are on track to deliver successfully and understand any potential delivery risks and issues. The review supported a straightforward approach to SDP monitoring that aligns with other existing processes to avoid duplication. CMT felt this would complement regular oversight of project activity within directorates, to ensure delivery stays on track.
- 3.19 Those interviewed strongly felt the focus should be on activity with high delivery risk, with a more proportionate approach if activity is delivering successfully or has been completed. Corporate Board and Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee will provide Executive and Non-Executive Member oversight of the monitoring and delivery of the SDP.

4. Recommendations

- 4.1 The review recommendations are set out in the table below:

Table 1: SDP Review Recommendations

Theme	Recommended Actions for the Strategic Delivery Plan 2020-23
<i>Engagement</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">a) A cross-party informal engagement session open to all Elected Members in September 2019, to invite views on what is important from a resident/community perspective, for officers and Cabinet to consider in submissions and prioritisation.b) Extended CMT resources discussion in December 2019, to support CMT/Cabinet Member prioritisation.c) Three CMT and Cabinet Member discussions on the long list (December 2019), short list (January 2020) and draft SDP (February 2020), before Corporate Board approval (March 2020). This allows more time for informal consideration for prioritisation.
<i>Outcomes</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">d) Development of the next Strategic Statement to align with and inform future SDP development.
<i>Data Quality</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">e) Lead officer responsibility to progress joined up conversations between the service and relevant corporate services (e.g. Finance, Strategic Commissioning etc), to inform SDP submissions in October-November 2019.f) Engagement from Finance Business Partners in October-November 2019, to support services to provide accurate financial information in their SDP submissions.g) Refine description requirements on MS Forms so officers are clearer about why the activity is happening and what the drivers are (e.g. legislative, external funding opportunity).h) Refine financial information requirements on MS Forms to include current annual revenue spend, lifetime contracted spend, external costs and internal costs (if known).i) Include milestone information requirements on MS Forms to support future monitoring and stronger focus on delivery.

Theme	Recommended Actions for the Strategic Delivery Plan 2020-23
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> j) Refine decision making information requirements on MS Forms to inform corporate advice and demand. k) Review of financial information with Finance Business Partners once draft budget is published at end of January 2020.
<i>Systems</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> l) Maximise the efficiency and productivity of MS Forms, MS Flow and Power BI to further automate SDP data collection and analysis. m) Use of MS SharePoint version control to create a live record of the SDP and provide a 'single version of the truth' for analysis. n) Further promotion and use of Microsoft Teams to progress cultural change.
<i>Prioritisation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> o) Refine SDP submissions criteria to encourage more strategic, cross-cutting 'programmes' of activity, with a strong link to delivery of Council outcomes and resident/community objectives p) Customise the DECA criteria for the SDP, particularly for strategic importance to take account of the resident perspective. q) Present prioritisation information within categories of similar types of activity, as well as a whole council view. r) Build more time into the process for informal, offline engagement between individual Cabinet Members and CMT officers to inform prioritisation (December 2019 to February 2020). s) Utilise the new financial information (see h above) and feedback from Extended CMT to further refine the short list to ensure we have the right capacity and resources to deliver.
<i>Products</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> t) Maintain the summary and full plan documents, further refining the narrative to avoid jargon and acronyms. u) Create an 'SDP on a page' for communications purposes.
<i>Monitoring</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> v) Use the milestones (see i above) to inform an SDP monitoring approach which aligns with other monitoring processes.

4.2 The SDP annual refresh to update the plan for 2020-23 will run from September 2019. Meanwhile the SDP monitoring process and corporate assurance on SDP delivery risk will begin from May 2019, to ensure we build on the momentum of the SDP and are well-informed to begin the next business planning round.

Recommendation(s): Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee is asked to:

(1) **Endorse** the Strategic Delivery Plan Review recommended actions (Table 1).

Background Documents:

Strategic Delivery Plan (2019-22)

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