

## Agenda item 9

<b>Report title:</b> Essex County Council Organisation Strategy	
<b>Report to:</b> Council	
<b>Report author:</b> Councillor Kevin Bentley, Leader of the Council	
<b>Date:</b> 13 July 2021	<b>For:</b> Discussion
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<b>County Divisions affected:</b> All Essex	

### 1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To ask Council to consider the draft of our proposed Organisation Strategy and to agree that it can be the subject of engagement with key partners before full Council is asked to consider adoption in October.

### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Council agree the draft Organisation Strategy as the basis for further engagement with key partners across the county and agree that following that period of engagement a recommended final draft will be brought back for adoption at Full Council in October.

### 3. Summary

- 3.1 In general the Council publishes a new Organisation Strategy after the County Council election. The strategy sets out the priorities of the newly elected administration for their four-year term of office. The purpose of the strategy is to:
- Set out clear strategic priorities that the organisation will collectively focus on
  - Set out in high level terms what we will do to deliver those priorities
  - Explain how we will work as an organisation to deliver effectively and efficiently
- 3.2 The Organisation Strategy is a key part of the overall strategic planning framework for the Council and forms part of the policy framework. It represents our contribution to delivering the long-term Essex Vision which we and other public sector partners have adopted. Within the Council, the Organisation Strategy guides business planning and the development of the Medium-Term Resources Strategy (MTRS) and it shapes the annual budget and Organisation Plan. The Cabinet cannot take decisions which are contrary to the Organisation Strategy.
- 3.3 We are proposing to call our new organisation strategy: *Everyone's Essex*. The context for the new strategy is inevitably shaped by the pandemic and the wide-ranging impacts it has had on the economy, health and wellbeing,

education and transport. But the strategy isn't just about the pandemic; it is also about preparing Essex for the future, addressing the big issues of our time including climate action, economic transition, excellence in education and skills and levelling up opportunities for all our residents.

3.4 In line with this context, the strategy embodies the themes that the new administration has set out of:

- **Renewal** – helping our residents, our communities and our businesses to recover and rebuild following the pandemic
- **Equality** – ensuring that growth and renewal benefits all and that everyone in the county has the opportunity to succeed in life
- **Ambition** – ensuring that as a Council we are always reaching for the stars to secure the best outcomes and the best value for money that we possibly can for our residents and businesses

3.5 The new strategy is anchored around four new strategic priorities:

- A strong, inclusive and sustainable economy
- A high-quality environment
- Health, wellbeing and independence for all ages
- A good place for children and families to grow

3.6 Each priority has five commitments (so a total of 20 in total), which are the things that we commit to doing to achieve these priorities over the next four years. These commitments deliberately do not describe everything that the Council does. They are focused on those areas of action that are needed to drive strategic change. This reflects the spirit of the strategy, which is to take action now on the big strategic issues facing us so that Essex and its people can look forward to a bright future.

3.7 The strategy also includes sections on:

- **Levelling Up** – because levelling up is a key objective that cuts across all of our strategic priorities and requires collective action across the Council and across partners.
- **How We Will Deliver** – because strategies cannot succeed if they only describe the ends, they also have to be clear about the means. Our strategy therefore sets out how we will work and makes a clear commitment to working in a joined up, collaborative, open-minded and evidence-based way. These ways of working are not “nice to haves”; they are essential if we are to deliver on a set of issues that by their nature are complex and involve all parts of the public sector, businesses, the voluntary and community sector and communities themselves.
- **Service excellence** – because delivering high quality and value for money services is core to our mission as a Council and we never forget that residents pay for, use and in many cases rely on our services to meet essential needs.

- 3.8 Overall, the strategy represents some continuity with what has gone before, but also significant change. There is much more emphasis in this strategy on climate action, on modernising our infrastructure, on levelling up, on educational excellence and on transforming care to support independent living. There is also more emphasis on partnership working, building on the excellent partnership work that has taken place during the pandemic to keep services running and to protect our most vulnerable residents. We will deepen our work with partners across the public, private and voluntary sectors and including with our suppliers. We will also strengthen collaboration with other groups, like the arts and heritage sector, that haven't previously been a focus for the Council but have an important role to play as well.
- 3.9 The final strategy, when it is adopted, will also include performance measures and delivery plans, but these are not included in the draft strategy now because they will be subject to further work over the summer. New equalities objectives for the Council will be published in the coming months as part of our Levelling Up work and will be subject to formal consultation as required. The equalities objectives in the current Organisation Strategy will remain in force until the new ones are adopted.
- 3.10 Over the summer, we will be carrying out further engagement (not a formal consultation) on the draft strategy with Councillors, our staff and our partners. The engagement is not intended to result in a fundamentally re-write of the strategy but to:
- Check that we have framed and communicated the strategy in the right way so that it is clear what we plan to do and we are using language that resonates with people.
  - Check that we haven't left anything out of the strategy that is essential for the Council to deliver to achieve our shared goal of building a successful future for Essex.
  - Explore how we can best work together with others in a collaborative way to deliver on our shared priorities.
- 3.11 The final strategy will then be brought back to Full Council for adoption in October on the recommendation of the Leader or the Cabinet.