

# Corporate Policy and Resources Committee



10 February 2025

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| <b>Title</b>                     | Corporate Plan 2024-28 progress report   |
| <b>Purpose of the report</b>     | To make a decision   |
| <b>Report Author</b>             | Lee O’Neil, Deputy Chief Executive   |
| <b>Ward(s) Affected</b>          | All Wards  |
| <b>Exempt</b>                    | No   |
| <b>Exemption Reason</b>          | N/A  |
| <b>Corporate Priority</b>        | Community<br>Addressing Housing Need<br>Resilience<br>Environment<br>Services  |
| <b>Recommendations</b>           | <p><b>Committee is asked to:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Note the update on progress with the planned actions under each of the Corporate Plan priorities, which are summarised in <b>Appendix A</b>.</li> <li>Agree to a review of the planned actions under the Corporate Plan to take account of the factors outlined in this report, in particular the proposed reorganisation of local government in Surrey; and for progress with any revised prioritisation of actions to be reported back to the next meeting of this Committee.</li> </ol> |
| <b>Reason for Recommendation</b> | The Corporate Plan (‘the Plan’) is a key policy document which outlines the proposed strategic priorities for the Council for the period of the Plan, and the values the Council will abide by in conducting its activities.   |

## 1. Summary of the report

| What is the situation  | Why we want to do something  |
|--|--|
| The Corporate Plan is a key strategic plan for the Council, which sets out the authority’s priorities and planned actions for the term of the Plan. It also outlines the values it expects its Councillors and | It is important that the Council continues to monitor and report progress on actions under the Plan and that it continues to keep those actions, and the overarching priorities, under review to take account of any changes in the wider environment that the Council |

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| staff to work to in delivering those objectives.   | operates in and any financial and operational pressures the authority faces.  |
| <b>This is what we want to do about it</b>   | <b>These are the next steps</b>   |
| This report provides an update on progress with the actions under each key theme within the Plan. Changes in national Government policy, in particular proposed reorganisation of local government, mean that it is important for the Council to review/revise the Plan and its priorities over the coming months to ensure the Plan is deliverable within any additional requirements or constraints that could be placed upon the authority by such changes. | Committee is asked to note the progress with the proposed actions under the Plan and consider any changes required. |

- 1.1 This report provides an update on progress with the Council’s current Corporate Plan 2024-28 (‘the Plan’), outlining the Key Actions where significant progress has been made under each of the five priority areas.
  - 1.2 Although the Council has progressed well in delivering specified actions under the Plan, when it was originally agreed it was recognised that the Council would be likely to encounter some challenges in delivering its corporate priorities due to exposure to wider externalities, such as inflationary pressures, demands for housing and changes in government policy.
  - 1.3 One new significant risk which has, however, evolved in recent months, and which may severely impact on the Council’s ability to deliver the Plan and its priorities, is the Government’s recent White Paper on Devolution, which includes proposals for Local Government Reorganisation in two-tier areas, such as Surrey. Surrey will be in the first wave of authorities to go through this process, which means that Spelthorne Borough Council will no longer exist as a sovereign authority within 2.5 years.
- 2. Key issues**
- 2.1 The Plan specifies five priorities which are areas where the Council agreed to target some of its resources during the term of the Plan, which are:
    - Community
    - Addressing housing need
    - Resilience
    - Environment
    - Services
  - 2.2 An Action Plan was developed under each of the priorities and key themes contained in the Plan, outlining what the Council is planning to deliver under each priority.

2.3 An Action Tracker was developed to enable Councillors to view progress with the actions under the Plan at any time.

## Key highlights

2.4 Councillors will note that significant progress has been made with a wide range of actions specified under the Key Themes for the Council's five priority areas. The majority of these areas are, as would be anticipated, the specified short-term actions, although there has also been some progress on a number of medium and long-term actions. These are outlined in **Appendix A**, with information on dates when these were completed or where significant progress has been made but work is ongoing. These include:

2.5 Under Community:

- Maintaining a clean and safe borough, launching the Keep Spelthorne Clean campaign and dealing with anti-social behaviour through new Public Space Protection Orders, swift action to remove graffiti and new CCTV cameras to monitor fly-tipping hotspots.
- Promoting healthier communities through the Spelthorne Healthy Communities Partnership, installing new play areas and opening the world's largest Passivhaus leisure centre.
- Empowering communities, creating a new Citizens' Panel to help shape the Council's Planning Design Code, holding a range of youth engagement events and continuing to increase membership of the Council's community centres.

2.6 Under Addressing Housing Need:

- Delivering more homes which meet the needs of residents and improving quality by purchasing 82 new housing units with Local Authority Housing Fund support, tacking action to control the development/improve the condition of Houses in Multiple Occupation, whilst also preventing over 350 households from becoming homeless.
- Getting approval from the Inspector to progress with the Local Plan Examination, after reaching a Statement of Common Ground with the Environment Agency.
- Ensuring residents can remain independent in their own homes through Disabled Facilities Grants, an in-house handyperson service and supporting people with hospital discharge.

2.7 Under Resilience:

- Improving the financial resilience of the Council through a new Asset Management Strategy and approval of a Development Disposal Strategy, medium-term cashflow support for Knowle Green Estates Ltd put in place, and continuing to explore opportunities for collaborative working with partners.
- Improving the economic resilience of the Borough through the Spelthorne Business Hub and the relocated Jobs and Skills Hub, for which a further year of funding was secured from the Department for Work and Pensions.

- Preparing for the effects of climate change through continued work with partners to support the River Thames Scheme and implementing relevant aspects of Surrey County Council's 'Climate Change Adaptation and Resilience Strategy'.

## 2.8 Under Environment:

- Progressing the Council's journey to Net Zero 2030 through procurement of a new electric Spelride vehicle, becoming a bronze-level carbon-literate organisation, and approving installation of a solar canopy on the Eclipse Leisure Centre Car Park.
- Protecting and enhancing our environment by developing a new Council tree nursery; adopting a new Air Quality Management Area/Action Plan and a Climate Change Supplementary Planning Document.
- Championing local action, working with local groups to develop new wildflower meadows and locally sourced community food growing initiatives; and through the Council's Sustain Spelthorne programme, running energy and carbon reduction seminars/audits for local businesses and securing grant funding to support 28 local businesses to be greener.

## 2.9 Under Services:

- Delivering community focused services by seeking views through a residents' survey and a new Spelthorne Partnership Assembly.
- Developing digitally enabled and accessible services by obtaining funding for digitisation of planning services, increasing the uptake of the Customer Portal and dealing with resident queries through the Council's 'Report-it' tool.
- Being a responsible employer by undertaking a staff survey, which had the highest level of staff satisfaction and engagement out of 70 local authorities previously surveyed (since such surveys commenced in 2012).

2.10 The Council, like most local authorities across the country, faces a particularly challenging budget setting process for the next few years due to a combination of factors including inflationary pressures and the cost-of-living crisis. In recognition of this, the Council agreed to monitor progress with the Plan and to review and adapt, where necessary, the Council's priorities and actions under them to take account of the changing environment and economic circumstances in which the Council operates, as well as the changing needs of Spelthorne's communities. It was therefore proposed to undertake an annual review of progress with the Plan around the time when the Council's Annual Report is produced.

2.11 In December 2024, the Government released their Devolution White Paper, including proposals for a reorganisation of local government, which would ultimately end the two-tier system of County Councils and District/Borough Councils in favour of the development of larger unitary authorities (population circa 500,000+). On 5 February 2025 the Council received confirmation that Surrey will be in the first wave of local government reorganisation. This will require a business case for unitary reorganisation to be prepared and submitted by the end of March 2025, which, if agreed by the Government, will result in Spelthorne Borough Council no longer existing as a sovereign

authority from April 2027. This would inevitably impact on Spelthorne's Corporate Plan, which runs to 2028, and the planned actions it outlines, including a range of medium to long-term actions that are unlikely to be deliverable within a shorter timeframe. It is also unclear at this stage what restrictions could be placed on this Council's ability to fund any planned projects going forward.

- 2.12 The Best Value Inspection process is due to report to the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) by the end of this month, and then in due course the Ministry will issue a public response. That response could require additional actions to be undertaken, which could impact on the Corporate Plan and prioritisation.
- 2.13 In light of these developments, there will be a need to review the current Plan, re-prioritise resources and consider ways in which any revenue budget financial headroom, and funding streams such as the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), section 106 contributions and the Council's Green Initiatives Fund can deliver best value and be fully allocated for the benefit of our communities in pursuit of Spelthorne's corporate priorities, before the Council loses sovereign control over those budgets. Similarly, the Council will need to agree the priority projects which should be pursued, including progressing the planned Waterfront (Bridge Street Car Park) development, and the development of Ashford Multi-Storey Car Park and Ashford Victory Place, delivering 100% affordable rented properties at the latter if possible.
- 2.14 To assist with the Corporate Plan review process, work will be undertaken to divide the current Action Plan into:
- Completed actions,
  - Actions still in progress, with estimated completion dates, and
  - Planned actions that are yet to be commenced.

### **3. Options analysis and proposal**

#### **3.1 Option 1 (recommended option) –**

- (a) Note the update on progress with the planned actions under each of the Corporate Plan priorities, which are summarised in **Appendix A**.
- (b) Agree to a review of the planned actions under the Corporate Plan to take account of the factors outlined in this report, in particular the proposed reorganisation of local government in Surrey; and for progress with any revised prioritisation of actions to be reported back to the next meeting of this Committee.

#### **3.2 Option 2 - To propose an alternative approach.**

### **4. Financial management comments**

- 4.1 The Corporate Plan outlines the priority areas where some of Spelthorne's resources will be targeted to achieve the key actions listed. These priorities are therefore closely linked to the Council's future budget planning process. As outlined in this report, in addition to a range of external pressures likely to affect the Council's finances, there may also be restrictions placed on how the

Council can use its finances going forwards if any local government reorganisation is agreed for Surrey.

## **5. Risk management comments**

- 5.1 There is a risk that the Council may not be able to deliver all the desired outcomes specified in any new Corporate Plan due to budgetary, resourcing and time pressures. This risk can be minimised by regularly reviewing the Plan in parallel with the budget setting process.
- 5.2 By regularly monitoring and reporting progress to this Committee the Plan can be adapted as necessary to ensure that it remains relevant to the changing environment and financial pressures that the Council operates in. As outlined above, external factors relating to planned local government reorganisation will present a particular challenge to delivering a range of actions currently outlined under the Plan.
- 5.3 Any key risks associated with delivering actions under the Plan, are also proactively identified and managed/mitigated through the Council's Corporate Risk Register.

## **6. Procurement comments**

- 6.1 There are none.

## **7. Legal comments**

- 7.1 There are none.

## **8. Other considerations**

- 8.1 The Council's priorities are used to inform the individual and team objectives for staff through the appraisal and service planning process, and the values outline the desired behaviours for officers and Councillors in undertaking their roles.

## **9. Equality and Diversity**

- 9.1 The Plan outlines how the Council will ensure that we continue to deliver services that cater for all sections of our communities, how we will ensure that individuals and sections of the community are not excluded, and how we will support those most in need

## **10. Sustainability/Climate Change Implications**

- 10.1 One of the priorities outlined in the Plan is 'Environment'. The Plan outlines actions that Spelthorne will take in its own journey to Net Zero 2030 and the actions the Council will take to protect and enhance the wider borough environment.

## **11. Timetable for implementation**

- 11.1 If the report recommendations are approved by the Committee, work will commence immediately on categorising and reviewing the current Action Plan, with progress to be reported back to the next meeting of this Committee.

## **12. Contact**

- 12.1 Lee O'Neil – Deputy Chief Executive (l.o'neil@spelthorne.gov.uk)

**Background papers:**

There are none.

**Appendices:**

**Appendix A** - Summary of progress with Key Actions under the Corporate Plan  
2024-28

**Appendix B** - Spelthorne's current Corporate Plan 2024-28