



FULL COUNCIL

Wednesday, 22 November 2023

Subject	Our Direction 2028
Cabinet Member	Councillor Caroline Topping, Leader of the Council
Report Author(s)	Kate Blakemore Strategic Director Kate.Blakemore@eastsoffolk.gov.uk
Chief Executive	Chris Bally Chief Executive Officer Chris.Bally@eastsoffolk.gov.uk

Is the report Open or Exempt?	OPEN
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Category of Exempt Information and reason why it is NOT in the public interest to disclose the exempt information.	Not applicable
Wards Affected:	All Wards

Purpose and high-level overview

Purpose of Report:

A Strategic Plan sets out the strategic themes and priorities for the Council as part of the Council's Budget and Policy Framework. It is the key strategic document for the Council in setting the direction of East Suffolk Council.

The East Suffolk Plan 2019-23 was the Council's first ever Strategic Plan and has now reached the end of its term. The purpose of this report is to present the Council's new Strategic Plan, Our Direction 2028, to Council, as recommended by Cabinet on the 7th November 2023.

Options:

- 1) To approve the Our Direction 2028 as laid out in Appendix A of this report, as the Council's Strategic Plan for the next four years.
- 2) To make amendments to the Strategic Plan, Our Direction 2028 and subsequently approve the amended Strategic Plan, Our Direction 2028.
- 3) To not approve the Council's Strategic Plan, Our Direction 2028.

Recommendation:

That Council approves the Strategic Plan, Our Direction 2028, as set out in Appendix A of this report, as the Council's Strategic Plan for the next four years.

Corporate Impact Assessment

Governance:

The delivery of Our Direction 2028 will be supported by a governance framework which will include annual action planning and performance management.

ESC policies and strategies that directly apply to the proposal:

A Strategic Plan sets the out the strategic themes and priorities for the Council as part of the Council's Budget and Policy Framework. It is the key strategic document for the Council in setting the direction of East Suffolk Council for the next four years.

Environmental:

Environmental Impact is one of the four themes outlined within Our Direction.

Equalities and Diversity:

This Strategic Plan seeks to achieve inclusion and equality both within our workplace and across all our Communities in East Suffolk. No negative impact on any of the characteristics protected under the Equality Act 2010 are identified as a result of the new Strategic Plan.

Financial:

Approval of a Strategic Plan is required as part of the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.

Legal:

The Councils constitution outlines the need to have the Councils objective and priorities contained within a central document.

Risk:

The Council's Corporate Risk Register will be updated to reflect any specific risks associated the delivery of Our Direction 2028, in the same way that it does with the current Strategic Plan.

External Consultees:

Multiple - as part of the consultation process for the development of this Strategic Plan

Strategic Plan Priorities

The East Suffolk Plan 2019-23 was the Council's first ever Strategic Plan and has now reached the end of its cycle. Work has therefore been undertaken to update, build on and enhance this plan, and Our Direction 2028 presents four key themes, each with a number of supporting priorities. If approved, it will become the Council's key strategic document, setting the direction of East Suffolk Council over the next four years.

Background and Justification for Recommendation

1 Background	
1.1	A Strategic Plan sets the out the strategic themes and priorities for the Council as part of the Council's Budget and Policy Framework. It is the key strategic document for the Council in setting the direction of East Suffolk Council for the next four years.
1.2	The East Suffolk Plan 2019-23 was East Suffolk Council's first ever Strategic Plan and has now reached the end of its cycle. Work has therefore been undertaken to update and build on this this plan and to reflect the ambitions of the new Green, Liberal Democrat & Independent (GLI) Group administration.

2 Introduction	
2.1	In developing our new Strategic Plan "Our Direction 2028", work has been ongoing in terms of drafting this document and working collaboratively to reflect and refine it based on feedback from all Members, officers, stakeholders, and residents.
2.2	<p>Our Direction 2028 is a strategic-level document and therefore it's about the path we are embarking on together, collaboratively, over the next four years; an ambitious approach, creating that golden thread and setting targets to help us deliver what we aim to achieve by 2028. Our Direction 2028 sets out a vision and four associated themes, under which several priorities have been defined. The visions and themes are:</p> <p>Vision: Our aim is to promote a bright, green, open, free, and fair future for all East Suffolk</p> <p>Themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Environmental Impact Delivering positive climate, nature, and environmental impacts through the decisions we make and actions we take.• Sustainable Housing All homes in East Suffolk are safe, suitable, and sustainable, in communities where residents are proud to live.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tackling Inequalities Improving quality of life across the district by tackling financial, social and health inequalities. • Thriving Economy Enabling residents to benefit from, and contribute to a thriving, economy.
2.3	All four themes are connected and provide the overarching principles for the way in which the Authority will work as a whole – rather than being seen in isolation, the plan aims to present the themes and priorities as the ethos under which decisions will be made and the direction the authority will travel over the next four years.
2.4	Within each theme, key priorities are identified. These statements guide what is important to the Council and provide a steer on the areas which will be focused on within each theme. Our Direction 2028 can be found at Appendix A to this report.

3 Development of the Strategic Plan	
	Annual Strategic Plan Progress Report 2023
3.1	The East Suffolk Plan 2019-23 was East Suffolk Council’s first ever Strategic Plan, in nearing the end of its cycle consideration was given to what was achieved over the last year as part of the Council’s annual Strategic Plan report 2023, along with what was achieved over the whole lifetime of the Plan, considering what a new Plan could build on, accelerate and change focus on in terms of the GLI Groups own priorities.
3.2	<p>In summary for 2023 good progress was achieved within the following major projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business cases were completed, and funding approved by Department of Levelling up, Communities and Housing (DLUCH) for various elements of the Lowestoft Towns Fund Programme to deliver the transformational regeneration objectives for the town with all projects moving to/currently going through detailed design. • The first two work packages of the Lowestoft tidal flood defence barrier have progressed including engagement with businesses and community. • UK Shared Prosperity Fund investment plan was approved in November with year one projects all underway. • Our Ease the Squeeze campaigns under the Cost-of-Living programme identified almost £1 million of funding and delivered on-the-ground support including warm rooms, food-related projects and help with financial matters such as budgeting, access to benefits and grants. • A large programme of work to establish a new trading company, transferring services from the Norse Joint Venture has progressed during the 22/23 year.

	<p>East Suffolk Services Ltd has been established and went live on the 1st June 2023.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Deben Fields development at the former Deben High School site has progressed, with the demolition phase complete and the development management company appointed. • The Kitchen@Felixstowe (now known as the Sea You café) was completed in May 2022 as part of the Felixstowe Development programme. • All eight Community Partnerships across the district supported and delivered projects against priorities identified at a local level and more than 140 projects were funded in communities as part of our Community Grant Schemes. • Our Digital Towns implementation is complete – installing public wi-fi and footfall counters in eleven market towns across the district. • Refuse vehicles using greener HVO fuel and EV Pool cars are now on stream.
3.3	<p>Areas requiring further work have also been identified, plans have been developed to address these issues which are in summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New homes delivered across the district as part of our overall delivery of new homes within our local plan are slightly lower than targeted, due to challenges in the wider economy. • Delays to our own Housing Development programme means moving some completions into the next financial year or beyond, however a review of the capital programme is underway and reviews taking place to address delivery. • Housing regulation issues reported, and a plan put in place to fully address all areas. • Our waste collection figures for recycling and composting are lower than targeted, however there are plans in place to address service needs with the implementation of our trading company. <p>The Annual Strategic Plan summary report 2023 can be found at Appendix B of this report.</p>
	GLI Group Priorities
3.4	<p>In forming the administration of the Council following the local elections in May 2023 the GLI Group developed four key themes for East Suffolk, scoping out several priorities under each theme, prior to undertaking a wide range of consultation to enable these themes and priorities to be further finalised and captured within Our Direction 2028.</p>
	Consultation
3.5	<p>Whilst the themes were initially developed by the GLI group, including an initial set of priorities, much has happened in way of consultation with all Members, Officers, residents, and stakeholders to further develop and finalise the themes and priorities outlined in Our Direction 2028.</p>

3.6	<p>This consultation has included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Member briefing and ongoing discussions across all political groups. • Strategic Plan discussion at Scrutiny and Overview Committee in September 2023. • Corporate Leadership engagement sessions. • Online CEO staff briefings. • Staff engagement roadshows. • Press release and launch of an online survey for residents and stakeholders to complete. • Letters sent to key stakeholders asking for feedback.
3.7	<p>Feedback from staff and Members included clarification questions, suggested improvements in language, merging of and additional priority suggestions, alongside a significant number of ideas for action in terms of how the Plan can be subsequently delivered over the next four years.</p>
3.8	<p>Feedback from residents and stakeholders included a total of 380 online survey responses, with 89% of these responses coming from residents in the district. A summary of these responses is attached as Appendix C to this report and identifies which priorities under each theme are most important for our residents and stakeholders.</p>
3.9	<p>Interestingly areas of the survey also aligned with internal staff and Member feedback regarding additional priorities, clarification of language and ideas for action in terms of delivering this Plan. This feedback has been addressed as part of the finalisation of Our Direction 2028.</p>
Our Foundations	
3.10	<p>Our Direction 2028 is the Council’s blueprint for success over the next four years, and in delivering this Plan we recognise the importance of the solid foundations that are critically important to any successful local authority. As such we will remain committed to providing excellent quality services for our residents including the delivery of our core statutory services, always operating within a financially responsible way.</p>
3.11	<p>We will always listen to our residents and commit to engaging with them whenever possible. We will also find innovative ways of doing this, especially for residents that are less likely to engage with us and are harder to reach.</p>
3.12	<p>We will ensure our customers find it easy to do business with the council. On every occasion people interact with the council, it must be as easy as possible and we will always adopt a solution-focussed approach.</p>

3.13	Finally, we will always measure and reflect on our performance, including how we deliver this plan as part of Our Direction 2028. We will ask what our communities think in a variety of different ways, including our regular residents’ surveys, and take action when things are not going so well.
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4 Governance

4.1	<p>To govern the direction of the authority, using the Strategic Plan as the steering document, work has been undertaken to evolve the current governance framework to continue to provide oversight of overall performance and delivery against the Strategic Plan. This achieves several aims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversees the programme of work feeding into each theme. • Steers the activities of the Council to ensure they are delivering to the plan. • Monitors progress of delivery to the key priorities within each theme. • Monitors, understands, and challenges performance. • Monitors risks which may compromise delivery of strategic objectives.
4.2	Governance arrangements will include the development of an annual action plan that will contain the high-level programme of work that the Council will undertake to deliver against its strategic themes and how we will monitor to ensure the Council is moving in the right direction.
4.3	The governance arrangements will also include clear Key Performance Indicators (KPI’s) at a strategic level, that will be regularly monitored, reported and available to internal and external stakeholders.
4.4	Progress against this action plan will be reported annually in the form of an annual report.
4.5	Organisationally, to ensure the “golden thread” of the Strategic Plan runs throughout the organisation, annual service planning linked to the themes of the strategic plan, and its underlying governance structure, will be in place and complimented by service-level performance and appraisals.

5 Reason/s for recommendation

5.1	The East Suffolk Plan 2019-23 was East Suffolk Council’s first ever Strategic Plan and has now reached the end of its term. Work has therefore been undertaken to update and build on this this plan and to reflect the ambitions of the new Green, Liberal Democrat & Independent (GLI) Group administration.
5.2	Our Direction 2028 is the key document for the Council in setting the direction of East Suffolk Council for the next four years and following on from significant consultation and further development and finalisation of Our Direction 2028, this Strategic Plan is presented to Council for its approval.

Appendices

Appendices:	
Appendix A	Our Direction 2028
Appendix B	Annual Strategic Plan summary report 2023
Appendix C	Online Survey Responses Summary

Background reference papers:	
None	