

Report to: **Executive**

Date: **30 November 2023**

Title: **Corporate Strategy (The Council Plan) & Outline Delivery Priorities**

Portfolio Area: **Councillor Julian Brazil
Leader of the Council**

Wards Affected: **All**

Author: **Andy Bates** Role: **Chief Executive**
Neil Hawke **Assistant Director Strategy**

Contact: Directors@swdevon.gov.uk

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Executive:

- 1. Note the consultation responses at Appendix A;**
- 2. Consider the updated draft Corporate Strategy (now 'The Council Plan') as set out in Appendix B;**
- 3. Hold a further meeting of each Advisory Group (and an initial meeting of the Economy Advisory Group) to inform the final delivery plans alongside the budget for 2024/25 and the Medium Term Financial Strategy; and**
- 4. Note that a further report will be presented to the next Executive meeting that seeks to make a final recommendation to the Full Council meeting to be held on 15 February 2024 to adopt The Council Plan.**

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 The Executive considered a draft corporate strategy for the Council at its meeting on 21 September 2023 and agreed to proceed to public consultation in order to inform its detailed delivery plans.
- 1.2 The consultation period has been extended to the end of November 2023 in order to enable maximum engagement, particularly with Town and Parish Councils, many of whom would be considering the draft strategy through their formal meetings.
- 1.3 This report sets out the consultation response to date, recommendations on any amendments to the draft strategy, outline delivery plans and next steps.

- 1.4 It is considered that to better reflect the intention of the document, from this point forward, it be known as 'The Council Plan'.

2. Public Consultation

- 2.1 The public consultation on the draft corporate strategy commenced on Monday 25th September 2023 and is intended to run through until 30th November 2023 – a total of ten weeks.
- 2.2 The consultation included a range of ways to seek views on the draft strategy including:
 - a. An online public consultation platform with survey.
 - b. A dedicated email address to send 'free-text' responses
 - c. Two online Parish Council briefings.
 - d. Face-to-face meetings between Executive Lead for Economy and each Town Council – with a primary focus on economic support and alignment.
 - e. Resident engagement at Ivybridge, Kingsbridge and Totnes Markets.
- 2.3 While levels of response to the consultation were relatively low, the responses received were broadly in support of the priorities for the Council.
- 2.4 The key points from the consultation are set out in Appendix A to this report and have informed some minor amendments to the final strategy. A common theme emerging from the consultation was the wish for the Council to have greater clarity on exactly what it will deliver and to focus on delivering core services well.
- 2.5 The amendments made include:
 - a. Renaming from 'Corporate Strategy' to 'The Council Plan'
 - b. Clarifying on the front cover that the Strategy covers the period 2024-2028.
 - c. Addition of a specific primary aim under the Housing theme to specifically reflect the needs of our most vulnerable residents.
 - d. Minor amendments to reflect that the consultation so far has requested it contain less technical language.
- 2.6 The updated draft Council Plan can be found at Appendix B to this report. The Council Plan will remain a draft until it is considered alongside the delivery plans and the Council Budget in February 2023. This means that any further key points coming out of the consultation (which runs up until the date of today's Executive), can be taken into consideration in the final version.

3. Outline delivery plans

- 3.1 The Council Plan sets out a number of focus areas for the next four years including an overall ambition statement, a small number of primary aims and some initial actions for the first 12 months.
- 3.2 In order that the consultation responses be fully considered to shape the delivery plans, it is proposed that Executive Leads for each theme hold a further meeting of their respective Advisory Groups to shape the plans alongside setting of the budget for 2024/25.
- 3.3 While the final delivery plans will not be agreed until February 2024, it is important to note that plans are already underway to deliver projects where we can do so within the existing budget. The following sections set out progress already made under each of the themes.

3.4 Climate Change and Biodiversity

To support our primary aims for Climate and Biodiversity we have:-

- a) launched a thermal imaging camera lending scheme to enable homes and businesses to assess where they may be losing heat – we'll continue to review the scheme and consider extending it.
 - b) agreed to lobby Government for changes in order to simplify the setting up of community energy generation schemes.
 - c) completed power upgrades at Totnes Depot as a first part of the full electrification of our fleet.
 - d) held a symposium with Sustainable South Hams to begin the development of a 'Keep it Local' Scheme.
 - e) Agreed a £62,000 community projects fund for Climate and Biodiversity initiatives – giving each District Councillor £2,000 to support local schemes.
 - f) Commissioned the Bioregional Learning Centre to conduct learning and capacity building for local climate adaptation.
 - g) Developed an Electric Vehicle Charging Strategy for the District (for consideration by Executive today).
- 3.5 In order to shape the detailed delivery plans, it is proposed to hold a further meeting of the Climate and Biodiversity Advisory Group in December 2023 (date to be confirmed).

3.6 Housing

To support our primary aims for Housing we have:-

- a) Undertaken comprehensive research into the benefits of Community Land Trust's, community development and the role of delivery partners.

- b) Developed for launch the South Hams Housing Offer (for consideration at this meeting of the Executive) package to enable local communities to bring forward affordable housing schemes – this is scheduled to launch in early 2024. Worked with Kingsbridge Town Council to engage with the market and selected a delivery partner (Hastoe Housing) to bring forward a fully affordable housing scheme on sites owned by the Council in the town.
- c) Secured three Ministry of Defence properties to provide temporary housing for those fleeing conflict.
- d) Invested in the purchase 11 properties to address the need for temporary accommodation.
- e) Implemented a Council Tax discount scheme for Care Leavers
- f) Successfully lobbied government to enable us to implement a 100% Council Tax premium on second homes from 2025.

3.7 In order to shape the detailed delivery plans, it is proposed to hold a further meeting of the Housing Advisory Group in December 2023 (date to be confirmed).

3.8 **Economy and Jobs**

To support our primary aims for Economy and Jobs we have:

- a) Progressed delivery of town economy strategies (Town Plans). Starting with Ivybridge we have requested that each Town Council submit their priorities to inform their own Town Plans. All plans are expected to be in place by July 2025.
- b) Launched grant schemes including diversification grants and community resilience grants.
- c) Commenced development of a Local Cycle and Walking Infrastructure Plan ('LCWIP') due for completion by March 2024.
- d) Supported over 40 agricultural businesses with intensive packages of assistance for diversification.
- e) Commenced a project (with The Apricot Centre) to support farmers and food producers bring local products to new markets.
- f) Begun developing a Marine Economic Strategy – due for completion in March 2024 which will set out specific projects to be delivered.

3.9 In order to shape the detailed delivery plans, it is proposed to hold a meeting of the Economy and Jobs Advisory Group in December 2023 (date to be confirmed).

3.10 Services for our Communities

To support our primary aims for Services for our Communities we have:-

- a) Implemented full kerb side recycling and food waste collection for all homes across the district.
- b) Worked with Sustainable South Hams to support the delivery of community composting schemes.
- c) Brought a wide range of Council services under the same management structure to offer an even better frontline service.(community services report – include specifics from each of the individual services).
- d) Started to realign resources to form a small Community Development team to work with our communities to support their own ambitions.

3.11 Good quality Core Services

In order to deliver on our wider aims and ambitions, we have continued to focus on delivering good quality core services. Since May we have:-

- Launched a new website to make it easier for customers to interact online;
- Commenced a detailed review of our approach to planning enforcement to improve transparency and speed of decisions;
- Improved performance and responsiveness in our revenues and benefits service; and
- Launched a consultation portal to inform our future plans and priorities, listening to our residents.

4 Proposed next steps

- 4.1 It is important that detailed delivery plans are developed alongside the budget setting framework so that we can be assured we are resourced to deliver on the priorities. As set out earlier in the report, it is proposed to hold a further meeting of each Advisory Group to shape the strategic delivery plans. The Council Plan and strategic delivery plans will be considered by the Executive in January 2024 and Council alongside the budget in February 2024.

5. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance	Y	The Council Plan is one of the plans and policies that comprise the Council's Policy Framework. Consequently, decisions to approve, adopt or amend the final Council Plan and themes will be decisions of the Full Council.
Financial implications to	N	There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. The Council will seek and align

include reference to value for money		The Council Plan (what we plan to do) to the Council's medium-term financial strategy (how we plan to resource it).
Risk	Y	Having an agreed corporate plan ensures that Council resources are aligned to delivering on agreed priorities and plans. There is a risk that the plan is not agreed when finally considered by Council however this is mitigated through our consultation and engagement activity and by forming cross-political party Advisory Groups to shape the strategy and delivery plans.
Supporting Corporate Strategy		This report sets out the progress in developing the four-year strategy for the Council.
Consultation & Engagement Strategy		This report includes an appendix specifically covering the consultation responses to the The Council Plan.
Climate Change - Carbon / Biodiversity Impact		The Council Plan will set out our primary commitments to tackling climate change and increasing biodiversity.
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity		Equality and Diversity Implications will be assessed alongside the final Council Plan and detailed delivery plans.
Safeguarding		Safeguarding implications will be assessed alongside the final strategy and detailed delivery plans.
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder		
Health, Safety and Wellbeing		Health and Safety Implications will be assessed alongside the final strategy and detailed delivery plans.
Other implications		None at this stage

Supporting Information

Appendices:

- Appendix A – The Council Plan Consultation Responses as at 9th November 2023
- Appendix B – Updated version of The Council Plan

Background Papers:

- Executive -Draft Corporate Strategy – E17.23
<https://democracy.swdevon.gov.uk/documents/s30730/Draft%20Corporate%20Strategy.pdf>