

Corporate Strategy – Interim Consultation Update

Executive Summary

The council launched its consultation on its draft corporate strategy on Monday 25th September 2023 and it is scheduled to continue until 30th November. While it should be stated that this is the date of the Executive meeting, there will still be a chance to make any final amends in respect of any significant point being raised between the Executive meeting and Full Council consideration of the Strategy.

The consultation took the form of:-

1. An online consultation which included the full strategy and a short questionnaire
2. Short online 'polls'
3. Face to face engagement
4. Meetings with each of the town Councils
5. An opportunity for parish councils and other partners to submit a full written response to the draft priorities

While the formal consultation phase has remained open for 8 weeks, it should be noted that this is the beginning of the conversation and we would welcome views of partner organisations throughout the term of this council to ensure we focus on the right activities.

A common theme in responses was that it will be important to have detailed delivery plans against which we can be measured. This will be addressed through the Strategic Delivery Plans.

This report includes consultation responses up to 22nd November 2023 and the consultation will continue through until 30th November 2023.

1. Online consultation

The online consultation platform was launched on Monday 25th September and will remain open until 30th November 2023. The online portal can be found here

<https://ourcorporatesstrategy.commonplace.is/>

The online survey was promoted via social media, included in our press release and included in our residents e-newsletters on a number of occasions during the consultation window. We also provided posters to Members with a QR code and web address and handed out QR codes / web addresses to residents that stopped by during our marketplace events.

In the period to 25th September to 22nd November, a total of 99 responses were submitted to the online survey.

	Yes	No	Don't Know / Skipped
1. Did you find the Strategy easy to read and understand?	76%	9%	15%
2. Does the Strategy reflect the South Hams you live or work in and the challenges it faces?	59%	22%	19%
3. Do you feel that the ambitions, aims and actions set out in the strategy address those challenges suitably?	45%	23%	31%
4. Thinking about our broad ambitions around Climate and Biodiversity, do you think that our ambition and aims are right?	45%	25%	29%
5. Thinking about our priority area of Housing, do you think that our aims and ambitions are right?	47%	16%	36%
6. Thinking about our priority area of the Economy, do you think that our aims and ambitions are right?	47%	13%	39%
7. Thinking about our priority area of Community Services, do you think that our aims and ambitions are right?	49%	14%	36%

Overall the level of response to our online survey was low but many helpful comments were made from those responses we did receive. It is clear however that a number of respondents sought clarity on specific deliverables in order to respond (relatively high % of Don't know / skipped responses)

Some of the Comments for each of the above questions are as follows:-

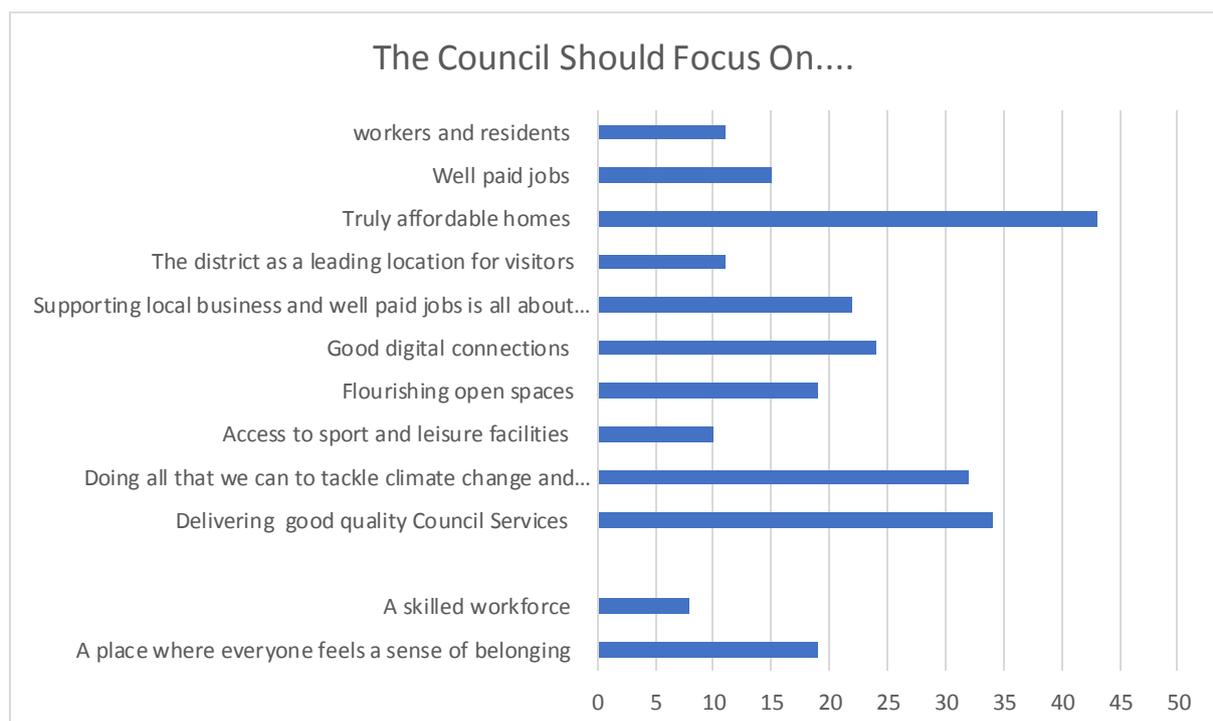
1. Did you find the Strategy easy to read and understand?

- Yes but it doesn't explain some of the terminology or implications (like Freeport)
- How are these ambitions being assessed , by who, what will we see as outcomes ? Who is responsible? How are they accountable? Until we know this the statements of intent mean nothing
- Too long, Skipped a lot of it
- Overall this report is easy to read. Good images ... lots of white space and bullet points. It is written like a press-release, very glossy and simplistic, with

an uber positive spin for the council. I would have found it helpful to have had further links to better understand some of the areas that I didn't fully understand. What are 'community assets' - what is a Freeport? A further link to the relevant info would have been helpful. Also - there are some wishy washy statements like "Develop plans to increase responsiveness of enforcement action to provide better outcomes for communities." What does that mean? It's hard to translate. An example might have been helpful for me.

- On the whole, I found the strategy too glib and full of buzzwords. It was also fairly light on actual initiatives and targets.
- Easy enough - still quite jargon heavy.
- The document reads like a rather vague corporate plan. It's very light on specific initiatives and heavy on vague intentions.
- It's a load of nonsense and a waste of taxpayers money.
- Not enough emphasis on waste management - its a primary part of what you are there for & it doesn't look anywhere near enough up the priority list
- At Kingsbridge Town Council's meeting held on 14 November 2023 there was much support for the strategy document and its commendable intentions. Members considered it to be well presented and approved of the Councillors' photos effectively taking ownership of the various ambitions and actions. However, it was suggested to drop the word "Corporate" which sounds highfalutin and refer to as either a "Strategy" or "Future Strategy". Moreover, some of the working is 'local government speak' and it may be wise to make it more taxpayer friendly.

As a final question in the survey, we asked respondents to select what they felt should be the most important for South Hams with the responses as follows:-



The full open text comments can be seen in Appendix 1 to this consultation report.

2. Short Online Polls

We know that typically, full online surveys for Corporate Strategy consultations do not generate a high level of response due to most residents only wishing to comment on one or two priorities that are of interest to them. To further promote the consultation and encourage completion of the overall survey, we posted a number of single question polls on social media platforms. The response levels to these posts were low for most questions however those that attracted the greatest response rate were as follows:-

- I am considering moving myself or my family out of the South Hams in the future, due to the affordability of houses? **37 Votes – 24% yes, 76% no**
- Have you already, or are you thinking about switching to an all-electric car in the near future? **21 votes, 52% yes, 48 % no**
- Are you worried about your carbon footprint? **19 votes - 42.9% yes, 57.1% no**

3. Face to face engagement

In order to ensure we reached out to as many residents as possible, we carried out some face to face engagement.

Firstly, we attended three Council operated Markets in Kingsbridge, Ivybridge and Totnes. We know that when people are out and about, they don't want to read a full strategy so we very much focused on setting out the high level ambitions of the Council and then asked residents what matters most to them in terms of the Council. During these events, we engaged with over 100 residents each of whom spent at least 5 minutes sharing their thoughts. It did become clear that there is much confusion over which Council has responsibility for what. For example, many residents commented that the Council should focus on sorting out potholes (which is a Devon County Council function). Another common theme coming up that is not delivered by the Council is the struggle to access dentistry and GP appointments. A number of residents felt that the Council should champion for improvements in these areas.

Access to housing, and the concept of truly affordable housing was important to residents.

In addition to the resident engagement, Sustainable South Hams arranged a meeting of interested individuals to consider our strategy, and in particular the climate elements. The online meeting was an opportunity for the Lead Member Climate and Biodiversity to set out our aims and ambitions. The meeting then broke out into a number of smaller sessions where attendees could discuss in detail and report back.

Finally, we also attended the South Hams CVS (now South Hams Community Action) AGM where we were offered the chance to set out the draft strategy and our ambition to work closer with the voluntary sector in the future. Positive feedback was received about the inclusion of Community Development as a core to underpinning the strategy. It was also

considered that the Council supporting voluntary groups and working closer with the CVS would be a welcome addition.

Points raised at each event include:-

Totnes

- Concern about the ongoing cost of living impacts.
- Frustration with ATMOS site progress.
- Young people need to be given more of a voice over the future.
- What's happening with Follaton House – could be put to better use by community.
- Concern about impact of Dartington Trust potential collapse
- Not enough GP's and Dentists – and as more houses come along it's only going to become more difficult to access

Ivybridge

- General feeling that while more housing is needed in the district, the supporting infrastructure and support services is already lacking and therefore more houses will only make this situation worse
- Positive feedback on some of our frontline services particularly Housing, Waste and grounds maintenance
- Condition of the roads and road safety was a common theme
- Access to GPs and Dentists in Ivybridge was also raised by a number of individuals
- Climate action came through strongly as a must, volumes of traffic in Ivybridge are a concern and there needs to be many more safer routes for cycling to reduce pollution. A few residents were concerned about the air quality in the town, particularly Western Road.
- Many residents felt that the Town Centre is declining and would benefit from the reintroduction of butchers and local produce stores –but at the same time, a number of residents felt that a value supermarket would also be a welcome addition in the right place.
- The Watermark is a great facility in the town, but several residents felt that more community activities are needed to bring people together. A number of residents said that the main reason they came into the town was because they felt isolated. One lady said that we were the first people she had had a conversation with in a week and would likely go another week before another conversation.
- There is good provision of activities for young children, but slightly older Children (early teens) lack anything constructive to do and as a result do tend to gather around in groups which some residents found quite intimidating.
- A couple of residents asked us to do all we could to stop DCC from stopping the mobile library service

Kingsbridge

- While supportive of additional housing, concern that infrastructure may not cope – including access to other services such as GP's and Dentists
- Challenges with local public transport – buses not being frequent enough
- Have the Council thought about an e-bike scheme?

- Balance of wildflowering vs areas looking untidy
- Real sense of community action in the area with groups such as Kingsbridge in Bloom being highlighted but it all costs money and accessing funds for community schemes is becoming more difficult. Locks Hill a cause of concern for some residents
- Need more electric vehicle charging points

4. Meetings with Town Councils

The Lead Member for Economy arranged meetings with each of South Hams Town Councils - Salcombe, Dartmouth, Kingsbridge, Ivybridge and Totnes in order to understand if our aims and ambitions aligned with their own.

Overall there was good support for the draft strategy, aims and ambitions and a positive response to better collaboration between the Town Councils and SHDC.

Each Town was asked to provide a written response to the council including any areas where they feel we might be able to work together in the future and to inform their future Town Plans.

Key priorities emerging from initial discussions with the town councils include:-

- **Salcombe** – resolving the significant parking challenges within the town, protecting marine businesses and future options for Whitestrand
- **Ivybridge** – Housing challenges – particularly for younger residents, better support for community groups and projects and improvements to the town centre (even though relatively few vacant shops)
- **Dartmouth** – Awaiting formal response
- **Kingsbridge** – working together on affordable housing schemes, want to build on the positive relationship with SHDC grounds maintenance teams
- **Totnes** – focus on ensuring thriving public spaces within the town

All of these are issues that can be addressed through draft aims and ambitions and included in town plans for the future. Each Town has also been asked to develop formal proposals for us to consider around the above themes.

5. Parish and Key Partner Responses

Finally, key partners including Parish Councils were asked to consider the draft strategy. A webinar is scheduled for 23rd November to get overall feedback and written responses will be considered in line with development of the delivery plans