

Report to: **Hub Committee**
Date: **21 September 2021**
Title: **A Plan for West Devon – Draft Strategy**
Portfolio Area: **Leader – Councillor Neil Jory**
Wards Affected: **All**
Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and clearance obtained: **Y / N**

Date next steps can be taken: Council on 28th September

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RECOMMENDATIONS:

That Council:

- 1. NOTES the results of the consultation on the draft ‘A Plan for West Devon’ Strategy**
- 2. ADOPTS ‘A Plan for West Devon’ and the thematic delivery plans**
- 3. NOTES the allocation of existing funding as set out in para 7.2; and**
- 4. APPROVES the additional £122,000 of cost pressures for 2022/23 and £168,000 for 2023/24 (the £168,000 includes the £122,000, therefore an additional £46,000 in 2023/24).**
- 5. APPROVES the use of £246,000 of Earmarked Reserves for the content of the Delivery Plans, as detailed in Section 7.**

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 At its meeting on 20th July 2021, Council approved the draft strategy ‘A Plan for West Devon’ (Appendix A) and resolved to commence a consultation on its draft priorities and longer term vision for the district.**

- 1.2 The consultation commenced on 19th July and continued for six weeks, closing on 6th September. It consisted of engagement with the public, key partners and neighbouring councils.
- 1.3 This report summarises the responses to the consultation and recommends adoption of the 'A Plan for West Devon' Strategy.
- 1.4 The report also sets out the resource requirements to deliver the plan (Section 7)

2. Background

- 2.1 The Council's previous corporate strategy was adopted on 22 May 2018 prior to the end of the previous administration. As a result of the pandemic, the context and landscape within which we now operate has fundamentally changed.
- 2.2 In recognition of the potential wide-ranging and long lasting impacts of the pandemic, in early 2020 Members undertook to develop a Recovery and Renewal Plan.
- 2.3 The development of the Recovery and Renewal plan, by its very nature, identified issues that were directly and indirectly related to the impacts of the pandemic. The ideas generated by Members during this process covered the full range of Council activity and influence.
- 2.4 This process has enabled the Council to develop a draft vision and strategy for West Devon, which was considered by Hub at its meeting on 13th July 2021. Following consideration, the Hub recommended that Council approve commencing consultation on the draft 'A Plan for West Devon' Strategy.
- 2.5 'A Plan for West Devon' sets out an ambitious vision for the future of West Devon as a place and puts the wellbeing of our residents, business and our beautiful natural environment at the centre of our plan.
- 2.6 Now supported by costed, thematic delivery plans over the next three years, the plan also sets a longer-term strategic direction of travel for the next twenty years. The intention is that the strategy should be a living document, with the delivery plans kept under regular review to ensure it remains focussed on the key needs and ambitions of our community.

3. Outcomes

- 3.1 The adoption of a new corporate strategy will ensure that Council resources, its service plans and the work programme of its officers are aligned in order to secure the efficient and effective delivery of the ambition and priorities set by Members.

4. Consultation

- 4.1 A consultation on the A Plan for West Devon strategy formally commenced on 21st July 2021, running for six weeks to 6th September 2021.
- 4.2 During the consultation period, we undertook a number of different methods to ensure a wide engagement. This included:
- On-street and online surveys of residents, businesses and visitors to understand their priorities for West Devon
 - Public and partner surveys on the draft priorities and specific actions
 - A series of online polls focused on the specific actions within the plan; and
 - Conversations with key partners and neighbouring local authorities
- 4.3 The consultation was widely publicised through media, social media and newsletters to town and parish councils, businesses and key partner organisations.
- 4.4 The engagement levels for the activities are as follows:

Public and Partner survey about the A Plan for West Devon Strategy Document and high level priorities	82 responses
On-street and Online survey about priorities for the area	Residents – 236 responses Businesses – 60 responses Visitors – 79 responses
Online 'Quick' polls on individual priorities	501 responses

- 4.5 On the whole, the responses indicate that the 'A Plan for West Devon' has been welcomed and that the areas identified by the Council to focus on for the next three years are broadly supported.

Public and Partner Survey

- 4.6 The public and partner survey which focused on the strategy document and high-level focus areas, received 82 responses of which 82% of respondents found the strategy easy to read and understand. Furthermore, 84% recognised the challenges facing West Devon as set out within the document.

On Street and Online Survey about priorities for the area

- 4.7 From previous experience, we know that detailed surveys on strategies do not tend to attract a significant level of engagement and so we also ran a survey asking our residents, businesses and visitors for their own views on West Devon and what they considered the main challenges facing the area.
- 4.8 This engagement consisted of both face-to-face surveys and an online survey which in total attracted 375 responses.
- 4.9 One of the key questions within this survey for our residents was 'What bothers you the most about living in West Devon with each participant being able to select three options.
- 4.10 It is clear from the responses from our residents that poor transport links, lack of truly affordable housing and low paying jobs are of concern to them. These all have a specific focus within 'A Plan for West Devon' and are allocated specific actions within our thematic delivery plans.

Businesses

- 4.11 We also asked our businesses a series of questions to understand their views and to inform our final priorities. A total of 60 businesses responded to the survey. Of those, 44% felt optimistic about the future of their business in West Devon. Clearly an area that needs to be addressed going forward.
- 4.12 Among the largest areas of concern for businesses within West Devon was the ability for businesses to hire the right people – with over a third of respondents highlighting this as a concern.

Feedback from partners

- 4.13 Discussions have been held with many key partners and neighbouring authorities to understand their thoughts on our key priorities.
- 4.14 Again, on the whole, partners have been supportive and agreed with the need for a longer-term vision underpinned by shorter term, specific deliverables.

- 4.15 Devon County Council is a key partner that we will work with in delivering many of the actions within the thematic delivery plans. We are pleased that they have given a positive endorsement of A Plan for West Devon and confirmed that it closely aligns to their developing strategy which will be considered by County Councillors in November.
- 4.16 The full responses and comments are being collated and a copy will be made available to Members. All feedback will be subject to review and help inform further iterations of the thematic delivery plans.

5. Thematic Delivery Plans

- 5.1 'A Plan for West Devon' sets out our longer-term ambition. To support this ambition, we have developed thematic delivery plans, which set out the priorities for each area. This will enable us to ensure our resources are aligned to supporting Members' priorities.
- 5.2 The delivery plans have been developed by Lead Members and the newly constituted advisory groups in consultation with officers from across the Council for each of the coming three years. Although it has not always been possible to detail actions beyond the first year, for example where the year one action is a feasibility or development of an action plan.
- 5.3 Wherever possible SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) targets have been developed but, as set out in 5.2 above this has not been possible in all cases, and 'proxy' measures have also been used.
- 5.5 The Hub Committee considered the thematic delivery plans as set out in Appendix B and are recommending to Council that they be adopted.
- 5.6 Once adopted by Council, the delivery plans will be subject to regular monitoring, annual updates and reporting through the Hub and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 5.7 The newly constituted advisory groups will continue to:
- focus on and monitor the delivery of targets within the adopted 'A Plan for West Devon';
 - look forward and horizon scan to identify future issues and challenges that relate to the thematic area; and
 - provide support and guidance to the lead Hub Committee Member

6. Performance Management

- 6.1. Alongside 'A Plan for West Devon', we have developed an enhanced Performance Management Framework for the Council, as set out within the thematic delivery plans.
- 6.2 The 'A Plan for West Devon' performance management framework sets out how the Council plans and organises its resources to achieve its vision and priorities.
- 6.3 The framework also sets out how we will monitor progress against delivering the plans and ensures that there is clear accountability and clarity on corporate performance reporting.
- 6.4 Monitoring will be through a broad bundle of measures including:
 - the timescales and measures of success set out in the thematic delivery plans
 - an updated suite of service key performance indicators (KPI's)
 - an updated suite of customer KPI's
 - The work of the advisory groups (as set out in 5.7 above)
 - A formal review process and oversight by the Hub; and
 - Thematic updates to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- 6.5 The performance reporting will be underpinned by an updated and robust objective setting regime across the Council. All staff will have a clear understanding of their role in delivery against 'A Plan for West Devon' and performance against their objectives will be regularly monitored.

7. Resource Implications

- 7.1 The delivery of 'A Plan for West Devon' over the next 3 years represents a commitment of £858,000 delivered primarily through the refocussing and re-alignment of existing resources. Some of the financial commitment (£332,000) comes either from this realignment or from pre-identified funding reserves, including the Recovery Plan and Corporate Strategy Earmarked Reserve, and existing revenue budgets.

- 7.2. The content of the plans will utilise £190,000 of the Recovery and Climate Change earmarked reserve (which has a budget of £200,000). In addition the content of the plans will utilise £246,000 of Earmarked Reserves in total, being £30,000 from the Homelessness Earmarked Reserve (for a housing needs assessment), £80,000 from the Innovation Earmarked Reserve (Thriving Economy Delivery Plan), £106,000 from the Business Rate Retention Earmarked Reserve (Thriving Economy Delivery Plan) and £30,000 from the IT Earmarked Reserve (for a new website). There is £132,000 funding from existing budgets (such as the Additional Restrictions Grant funding from the Business Grants).
- 7.3 The cost pressure is £122,000 for 2022/23 and £168,000 for 2023/24 (a total of £290,000), which represents 34% of the total of commitment of £858,000. The £168,000 for 2023/24 includes the £122,000 recurring cost pressure from 22/23, therefore it is an additional £46,000 in 2023/24.
- 7.4 The pre-identified funding source is detailed in this paragraph for reference. Council on 30th March 2021 (Minute reference CM42/HC 68) approved an allocation of £200,000 for the Recovery Plan and Corporate Strategy.

8. Proposed Way Forward

- 8.1 At its meeting on 22nd September 2021, the Hub Committee resolved to recommend to Council that the final draft of 'A Plan for West Devon' and the thematic delivery plans be adopted.
- 8.2 Furthermore, it has recommended to Council to approve the use of resources as set out in section 7 of this report.

9. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance	Y	The Corporate Strategy is one of the plans and policies that comprise the Council's Policy Framework. Consequently, decisions to approve or amend the Corporate Strategy and themes are decisions for the Full Council.

Financial implications to include reference to value for money	Y	<p>The financial commitment for delivering against the aims contained within 'A Plan for West Devon' is £858,000 over the period 2021-2024 in total. Some of this expenditure is from pre-identified funding sources such as the £200,000 for the Recovery Plan and Corporate Strategy and existing revenue budgets (such as the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) business grant scheme).</p> <p>The cost pressure is £122,000 for 2022/23 and £168,000 for 2023/24 (a total of £290,000), which represents 34% of the total of commitment of £858,000. The £168,000 for 2023/24 includes the £122,000 recurring cost pressure from 22/23, therefore it is an additional £46,000 in 2023/24.</p> <p>In addition, the content of the plans would utilise £246,000 of Earmarked Reserves as detailed in Section 7.</p>
Risk	Y	The key risk relates to the need to have an up to date corporate strategy that reflects the Council's future plans and is suitably resourced. These risks are managed through the process detailed in Section 5 of this report.
Supporting Corporate Strategy	Y	This report proposes adoption of a new Corporate Strategy – A Plan for West Devon. Additionally the report sets out the thematic delivery plans, which will be monitored by Hub and Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
Climate Change - Carbon / Biodiversity Impact	N	There are no direct impacts on climate change and biodiversity however tackling these issues are considered central to the development of the new plan.
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity	N	No direct implications
Safeguarding	N	No direct implications
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder	N	No direct implications
Health, Safety and Wellbeing	N	No direct implications
Other implications		None

Supporting Information

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – ‘A Plan for West Devon’

Appendix 2 - Thematic Delivery Plans and Performance Management Framework

Background Papers:

None