

Overview and Scrutiny (External). Our Plan Review

Report to: **Overview and Scrutiny (External)**

Date: **17th November 2015**

Title: **Our Plan Review**

Portfolio Area: **All**

Wards Affected: **All**

Relevant Scrutiny Committee: **Overview and Scrutiny**

Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and clearance obtained: **Y**

Date next steps can be taken: **Hub Committee**
(e.g. referral on of recommendation or implementation of substantive decision)

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Recommendations:

That the Panel recommends to the Hub that it recommends to Council to

- (1) Note the monitoring of Our Plan and the 2015/16 Annual Delivery Plan
- (2) Re-Issue *West Devon Our Plan* for the start of the 16/17 Financial year as a document that
 - Recognises *Our Plan* as the single comprehensive Council Plan
 - Restates the Council's corporate Vision and Objectives
 - Establishes the common basis for the Councils Financial Plan, Asset Management Plan, Local Plan and all other Plans and Strategies
 - Establishes long term and short term priorities for delivery including a delivery plan commencing in 2016/17
 - Establishes mechanisms for delivery
 - Establishes engagement, monitoring and review procedures
 - Provides context for subsequent incorporation of the Local Plan element currently subject to separate preparation
- (3) Agree a process of member participation in concluding this work
- (4) Require the proposed document to return to O & S, Hub and Council for agreement prior to publication.

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1. Executive summary

The Council has made clear its vision to enhance the quality of life for West Devon individuals and communities through all available means. *Our Plan* is the comprehensive, overarching plan that delivers this vision.

Our Plan sets out the objectives that underpin this vision and draws together all the mechanisms at the Councils disposal to ensure delivery. This includes use of the Councils finances, staff, Members, assets, partnerships and development & legislative powers.

Central to *Our Plan* is a future development strategy for homes, employment and formal planning policies (the Local Plan). The extent of changes to planning legislation and issues relating to this part of *Our Plan* has diverted attention away from the wider role of the plan in recent months. The suggestion to members is that *West Devon Our Plan* is reinvigorated and focusses afresh on delivering measured outcomes and an excellent customer service whilst allowing the statutory Local Plan element to be incorporated once it's formal legal process is completed. Whilst *Our Plan* imbeds the Local Plan it shouldn't be held back by planning matters and the proposal is that *Our Plan* push forward in a format that can bring the Local Plan on board when it is ready.

Publication of a refreshed *Our Plan* focussing on key priorities and a delivery plan commencing in 2016/17 is proposed.

2. Background

Historically the Council had two strategic plans; the *Development Plan* and the *Connect Strategy* – and numerous other plans. Given the need to work more efficiently in the new operating model and the new duty to produce a Local Plan to cover strategic planning matters Members approved the production of *West Devon Our Plan* as the Council's one over-arching, strategic, document in April 2014. Initial "Regulation 18" consultation took place during 2014.

In January 2015 Members approved *West Devon Our Plan* for 6 week formal "Regulation 19" public consultation. This version of *Our Plan* provided the overarching corporate plan and Local Plan as a seamless document. The consultation provided much support for *Our Plan* – particularly around the vision, objectives and the ambition of the Council to use its range of powers to plan and deliver positively for individuals and communities. What generated concerns were a range of local and national issues that challenged the statutory Local Plan element of the plan. These concerns and issues were reported to Hub Committee in September and, following consideration at Council, an amended approach and timescale has been agreed for this Local Plan development element.

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Under the comprehensive role of *Our Plan* it was decided to produce an accompanying delivery plan which would draw out, and deliver upon, Members key priorities for the coming year across all service areas. This plan was adopted by Council on 17th Feb 2015 as the Councils corporate Plan for 2015/16. Outcomes of this delivery plan are reported later in this item.

Overall the vision to bring together and deliver a single and coherent plan has had clear merit and has been driven through with focus and ambition. The local and national turbulence around the planning and housing legislation and case law has disrupted the smooth flow of *Our Plan* but there is now opportunity to refocus the approach to target delivery and outcomes on elements within our control whilst setting context for the subsequent incorporation of the Local Plan element.

3. What outcomes are required?

The Original intentions for *West Devon Our Plan* might best be summarised as

- The single comprehensive Council Plan
- Establishing the Council's corporate Vision and Objectives
- Establishing the common basis for the Councils Financial Plan, Asset Management Plan, Local Plan and all other Plan and Strategies
- Establishing long term and short term priorities for delivery including a recurring Delivery Plan
- Establishing mechanisms for delivery
- Establishing engagement, monitoring and review procedures

This item provides some summary feedback for member consideration

Establishing the Council's corporate Vision and Objectives

The Regulation 19 version of *West Devon Our Plan* established the following vision

Thriving Towns and Villages; Enhancing the Quality of life for Individuals and Communities

This was supported by a commentary setting background and context. See <http://wdbcweb.swdevon.lan/CHttpHandler.ashx?id=12825&p=0>

Objectives were also established under the following themes

- Our Wellbeing
- Our Communities
- Our Homes
- Our Economy
- Our Infrastructure
- Our Environment

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- Our Heritage
- Our Resources

Members may wish to consider how recent workshops around future priorities and budget setting sit within this context in terms of which areas are likely priority areas for delivery with limited future resources.

Establishing the common basis for all Plan and Strategies

Historically the Council has adopted numerous plans and strategies around distinct service areas. Under *Our Plan*, and the new way of working, these need to be simplified and harmonised – and only be produced where there is legislative requirement and/or a clear link to ensuring delivery of the *Our Plan* vision and objectives.

Plans relating to finance, assets and the Local Plan need to sit at the heart of *Our Plan* and be co-ordinated through *Our Plan*. There is opportunity to clarify this important function of *Our Plan* in any review of the introductory sections of the document ahead of 2016/17.

Monitoring Progress and agreeing future priorities

The published version of *Our Plan* anticipated a 2031 horizon. This is driven by the need for a 15 year Local Plan timescale. However the council's ability to deliver services also has to be planned on much shorter timescales – primarily driven around the annual budget and medium term financial strategy. *Our Plan* will clearly maintain the long term Local Plan led horizon but also needs to establish both short and medium term priorities based around resources.

This can be made clear ahead of 2016/17. It should also be recognised that *Our Plan* – with its outward looking community focus, is managed and delivered alongside the more internally focussed T18 work. This ensures that the outward ambition and internal processes underpinning delivery are being managed in tandem.

In order to focus on delivery Members decided to establish a delivery plan commencing in 15/16. Work was undertaken at both West Devon and South Hams and members came up with very similar priorities and actions.

These actions were adopted by members at both Councils and delivery has been underway since. For monitoring purposes the actions have been amalgamated into a single table and are presented at Appendix 1 for member's consideration. At both Councils the actions were grouped under the following headings

- Homes (within the Our Homes Objective)
- Jobs (within the Our Economy objective)
- Natural Environment (within the Our Environment objective)
- Customer Services (within the Our Communities objective)

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In reviewing Appendix 1 Members may wish to focus on

- From within the 8 objectives where are the priority areas for action in 16/17 and beyond?
- Which actions will be completed in 15/16 and can be deleted?
- Which actions will need to be carried into 16/17 – and what financial and staff resources will be required?
- What new actions might Members wish to see included – and if so what resources will need to be put in place?
- How effective are the current monitoring measures and how can these be improved?

Establishing mechanisms for delivery

The Council is well placed to influence and co-ordinate local services and has the benefit of numerous mechanisms at its disposal with which to deliver the vision, objectives and delivery plan. These mechanisms include

- Direct delivery
- Use of funding and Grants
- Staff resource
- Members involvement
- Legislation and powers
- Partnerships
- Liaison and influence
- Assets
- Locality working

The new way of working within T18 has opened up new opportunities to deploy these approaches. It is suggested that any update of *Our Plan* looks to utilise these approaches to best effect. In many instances this work is already underway – for example the scoping of trading opportunities, the review of partnerships and the refreshed Asset Management Plan. However as the Vision, objectives and delivery plan bed in there is clearly opportunity to look afresh at the most effective mechanisms for enhancing the quality of life for individuals and communities. As was originally intended *Our Plan* will inform commissioning decisions and this will increasingly come to the fore in coming months.

Establishing engagement, monitoring and review procedures

The establishment of *Our Plan* in early 2014 included an Engagement Strategy that set out how, where and when communities and individuals would be able to influence *Our Plan*. Much consultation has taken place which has largely endorsed the approach being taken in *Our Plan* and provides a mandate that takes forward the established Vision and Objectives.

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There will clearly need to be further consultation around the Local Plan element of *Our Plan* as it emerges next year – but less need to consult further at this stage on the Vision and objectives that were generally well supported.

4. What are the options?

Potential options, with headline risks and benefits, include

Option	Benefits	Risks
No further action and leave <i>Our Plan</i> as it is	No resource required	Plan loses profile and focus. No stated priorities for Council No context for corporate activity or delivery.
Selective review focussing on vision, objectives, priorities and achievable outcomes for start of 16/17. Local Plan element to be incorporated subsequently.	Targeted refresh. Relatively short document. Establishes corporate approach and delivery. Renews delivery Plan for 16/17 and beyond	Falls short of comprehensive plan with Local Plan policies and allocations omitted at this stage.
Comprehensive review awaiting outcome of Local Plan element	Will set out full and comprehensive approach.	Will need to await outcome of statutory Local Plan element. Full range of Council activity stalled by planning uncertainties.

5. Summary and conclusions

The approach to a comprehensive and overarching corporate plan has much to commend it. Members took a significant step towards this goal by agreeing the introduction of *Our Plan* in early 2014 and the subsequent publication of *Our Plan* in early 2015.

Unfortunately some of the momentum and focus has been lost with the complexities that have arisen around the development focussed, Local Plan, element of *Our Plan*. This has diverted both attention and time away from the greater benefits of the single plan, simplified vision & objectives and the delivery plan.

This item take stock of the current situation. There is clear opportunity to refocus and pick up momentum ahead of the next financial year. Issues are identified for member consideration and have been distilled into recommendations for Overview and Scrutiny to consider.

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6. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance	Y	<p>Localism Act 2011 (Section 1 – Powers of General Competence).</p> <p>Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012</p> <p>National Planning Policy Framework 2012 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004)</p> <p>Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004</p>
Financial	Y	There are no specific Financial implications from this item – however the agreement of any reviewed <i>Our Plan</i> and Annual Delivery Plan will need to consider financial implications.
Risk	Y	<p>A failure to review Our Plan and re-issue a renewed approach to the overarching plan could lead to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of coherent policy and delivery • Reputational harm • Ineffective use of resources • Poor quality service to those in need of support • Inequality of delivery across the Borough <p>These risks are mitigated by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of Our Plan • Renewed Annual Delivery Plan • Identification of resources to support delivery • Scope to integrate Local Plan as appropriate • Scope of opportunities for efficiencies through joint approach with SHDC
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity	Y	Our Plan approach and policies imbed equal opportunities and help prevent discrimination in our communities. Equalities review will be undertaken.
Safeguarding	Y	Our Plan approach and policies imbed safeguarding measures where necessary.
Community Safety, Crime	Y	Our Plan approach and policies support community safety and partnerships to support this

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and Disorder		
Health, Safety and Wellbeing	Y	Our Plan approach and policies include Health, Safety and Wellbeing. A health impact assessment will be undertaken
Other implications		None identified

Supporting Information - Appendices:

- Appendix 1. 2015/16 Annual Activity Plan Review

Background Papers: None

Process checklist	Completed
Portfolio Holder briefed	Yes
SLT Rep briefed	Yes
Relevant Exec Director sign off (draft)	Yes
Data protection issues considered	Yes
If exempt information, public (part 1) report also drafted. (Committee/Scrutiny)	No