



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Name and date of Committee	Finance and Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee –Wednesday 14 April 2021
Report Number	Agenda Item No. 7
Subject	Publica Business Plan 2020-22
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Councillor Michele Mead, Leader of the Council: Email: Michele.mead@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Giles Hughes, Chief Executive Tel: (01993) 861000; Email: Giles.Hughes@westoxon.gov.uk
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Summary/Purpose	To give the Committee the opportunity to comment on the Publica Business Plan 2020-22 before its presentation to Cabinet on 21 April 2021.
Annexes	Annex A - Publica Business Plan 2020-22 Annex B - Infographic
Recommendation	That the Committee decides whether to express a view to Cabinet on the Publica Business Plan 2020-22
Corporate priorities	Delivering excellent modern services whilst ensuring the financial sustainability of the Council
Key Decision	No
Exempt	No
Consultees/ Consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Publica Board• Cotswold District Council• Forest of Dean District Council• Cheltenham Borough Council

I. BACKGROUND

- I.1. As part of the establishment of Publica a number of items were identified as reserved matters for council approval to ensure that shareholder councils retained an element of control over their company. The reserved matters were approved in October 2016 as part of the governance principles underpinning the establishment of Publica.
- I.2. The reserved matters decisions fall to the shareholder representatives to determine. For each partner Council this is the Leader of the Council. To assist the Leader in reaching his decision the Finance and Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet reviewed the Draft Business Plan in 2020 and were invited to suggest appropriate amendments before it was adopted.
- I.3. In 2020 all of the Shareholder Councils adopted the two year business plan (2020-22) which is contained at Annex A and this contains four priorities which are:
- Support our member councils to deliver their ambitions
 - Get commissioning right
 - Be a great service provider
 - Be a great place to work
- I.4. The Business Plan provides the vehicle to carry forward and address the issues identified in the Managing Director’s assessment. The priorities in the plan are focused on supporting the partner councils to deliver their priorities, improve Publica’s approach to commissioning, continue to improve services and customer experience using digital technology, and investing in staff and managers.
- I.5. A set of action plans support the four business plan priorities and strategic actions. Progress is monitored by the Publica Board and progress will be reported to each Shareholder Council as part of their scheduled scrutiny committee programmes.
- I.6. Although progress has been made with the delivery of the business plan action plans (<https://www.publicagroup.uk/media/1546/publica-business-plan-2020.pdf>) during the last year, in some areas this has been held back as a result of the response to the coronavirus pandemic, which has dominated much of Publica’s work on behalf of the partner councils during the last year. The table below outlines some examples of progress that has been made under each priority:

Priority	Progress Update
Support our member councils to deliver their ambitions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Adoption of a Carbon Action Plan 2) Adoption of a Covid Recovery Plan 3) Delivery of affordable homes target 4) Work to support businesses and clinically extremely vulnerable residents during the pandemic - Outlined in appendix B 5) Adoption of an Investment Strategy
Get commissioning right	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Awarding contract extension to Ubico to deliver waste and grounds maintenance contract across West Oxfordshire 2) Launch of Members’ Portal to provide support to councillors 3) Production of Commissioning and Procurement User Guide and training for all staff

Priority	Progress Update
Be a great service provider	4) Launch of new council website and automation of basic enquiries 5) Implementation of replacement Revenues & Benefits system 6) Adoption of an Agile Working Strategy 7) Making data and business information live
Be a great place to work	8) Implementation of the new pay and grading structure 9) Introduction of new staff appraisal framework 10) Introduction of a new benefits platform 11) Registration for Investors in People accreditation and employee survey carried out 12) Commenced implementation of a leadership development programme

2. MAIN POINTS

- 2.1. The focus of the business plan is on supporting the partner councils to deliver their priorities, improve Publica's approach to commissioning, continue to improve services and customer experience using digital technology, and invest in its employees' development. Collectively, the fourteen strategic actions that support the business plan priorities form a cohesive programme achieving sustainable and embedded change over the business plan period.
- 2.2. The benefits of adopted a two year business plan were to enable a sustained focus on the priorities and the longer horizon fits better with the nature of the plan and priorities.
- 2.3. The current business plan is now a year old and half way through its life and the Publica Board reconsidered the priorities when it met on the 1 February and they believe they remain relevant and appropriate for the next year. The business plan is being presented to the Cabinet for consideration, recommending that it recommends to the Council Leader (as Shareholder representative) to give formal agreement to continuing with the current plan and priorities, as in 2020 the Finance and Management Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to review the Business Plan invited to suggest appropriate amendments before it is adopted.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1. As part of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) savings are included in line with the Publica business case approved in October 2016. Publica is required to deliver these savings and Strategic Action 6 in the business plan outlines a commitment to deliver these.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. This Business Plan has to be adopted in accordance with The Members' Agreement for Publica Group Limited.

5. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 5.1. There are no specific risks in adopting the Publica business plan as it is based upon the principles and targets set out in the business case approved by the Council in 2016 and the approval of this business plan in 2020.

5.2. If the Council does not approve the plan there is a risk that the company will not be able to commence some of the activities necessary to deliver the savings set out in the business case and Council's MTFS.

6. CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

6.1. The business plan has a priority to 'Support our member councils to deliver their ambitions' which includes the work to deliver the Council's Climate Action Strategy.

7. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

7.1. The report has no specific implications for any particular equality strand.

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

8.1. The Cabinet is free to make comments in relation to the Plan, and proposed amendments will need to be agreed by the other partner councils.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

9.1. The following documents have been identified by the author of the report in accordance with section 100D.5(a) of the Local Government Act 1972 and are listed in accordance with section 100 D.1(a) for inspection by members of the public:

- Report 69 to Cabinet dated 19 October 2016 and associated minutes
- recommendations made by the Cabinet to Council on 26 October 2016 and associated minutes
- Report 117 to Cabinet dated 18 March 2020 and associated minutes

9.2. These documents will be available for inspection at the Council Offices at Woodgreen in Witney during normal office hours for a period of up to 4 years from the date of the meeting. Please contact the author of the report.