



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Name and date of Committee	CABINET – 13 JULY 2022
Report Number	AGENDA ITEM No 13
Subject	WEST OXFORDSHIRE COUNCIL PLAN
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Cllr Andy Graham, Leader of West Oxfordshire District Council Email: andy.graham@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Giles Hughes, Chief Executive Officer for West Oxfordshire District Council Tel: 01993 861658 Email: giles.hughes@westoxon.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	To agree a revision of the West Oxfordshire Council Plan and development of an Action Plan that will underpin the delivery of the Council Plan. To agree a programme of engagement to inform the revision of the West Oxfordshire Council Plan and supporting Action Plan.
Annexes	None
Recommendation/s	<i>a) That Cabinet agree to a revision of the West Oxfordshire Council Plan. b) That Cabinet agree to the development of an Action Plan setting out activity to be taken to deliver the priorities of the Council Plan. c) That Cabinet agree to a programme of engagement that will inform the revision of the West Oxfordshire Council Plan and development of supporting Action Plan.</i>
Corporate priorities	The development of a revised Council Plan for West Oxfordshire will generate a new set of corporate priorities for the activity of West Oxfordshire District Council.
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	A programme of engagement is proposed to give a wide range of stakeholders the opportunity to inform and influence the priorities of the revised Council Plan to ensure that it reflects the issues of importance to those living and working in West Oxfordshire. It is proposed that this will include: a) A digital public consultation open to all b) A Town and Parish Council Forum c) A stakeholder event for a range of organisations active in the District who may be potential partners for delivering the priorities of the revised Council Plan

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1.** In May 2022 a new administration was voted into power at West Oxfordshire District Council and the Cabinet (made up of a cross party coalition, the West Oxfordshire Alliance) published an early set of priorities highlighting particular issues they seek to address during their tenure.
- 1.2.** The current adopted Council Plan 2020 – 2024 sets out 6 priorities established under the outgoing Conservative administration: climate action; healthy towns and villages; a vibrant district economy; strong local communities; meeting the housing needs of our changing population and modern council services and sustainable finance.
- 1.3.** It is timely given the new administration, and that the context in which these were developed has changed (not least by impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic), to revisit these priorities with a view to revising the West Oxfordshire Council Plan.
- 1.4.** A review provides an opportunity for engagement with a wide range of stakeholders, including the general public, to test that the priorities in the Council Plan correctly reflect the challenges facing the District today.
- 1.5.** The Council Plan will be underpinned by an Action Plan, setting out action to be taken by the Council in order to deliver Council Plan priorities. This will demonstrate that the Council is focussed on addressing issues that matter the most to those who live and work here.
- 1.6.** An up to date Council Plan will helpfully provide a corporate policy framework against which other areas of Council activity will sit, for example the review of the Local Plan (as the spatial strategy for the development of the District) and the allocation of £1,000,000 UK Shared Prosperity Fund monies to projects in the District.

2. PROPOSED ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMME

- 2.1.** Early discussions between Councillors and Officers have generated a set of 9 draft emerging priorities which provide a framework for discussions with stakeholders that will inform a review of the Council Plan:
 - Leading efforts and working with others to protect, restore and enhance the quality of West Oxfordshire’s natural and built environment.
 - Taking urgent action to address the climate and ecological crisis by working in partnership with others.
 - We will tackle inequalities by providing opportunities to everyone in West Oxfordshire to achieve their full potential.
 - Supporting businesses to ensure great opportunities for residents through a vibrant local economy and its services.
 - We will enable everyone to lead healthy and fulfilling lives in thriving communities.
 - We will help everyone live in a house that meets their needs.
 - Operate with a culture of openness, giving you a voice, choice, priority and access.
 - Securing your Council’s financial future to deliver on priorities and continuously improve your services.
 - We will work in partnership to influence and deliver more effective results for your communities.

- 2.2. In order to ensure that the priorities in the revised Council Plan correctly reflect the challenges facing the District today and address the issues that matter the most to those that live and work here wide reaching engagement is required. Three groups of stakeholders will be provided with an opportunity to input: the general public, Town and Parish Councils and organisations who are active in West Oxfordshire from the public, private and community and voluntary sectors.
- 2.3. To reach as broad and diverse an audience as possible a digital consultation will be held which will inform the Council Plan and the Local Plan, which is also in its early stages of development. This joint approach will have the benefit of enabling the public to input into both the Council Plan and the development of policy which will steer development of the District to 2041. By using digital platform CommonPlace (funded by the government's PropTech fund) there is an opportunity to make the consultation accessible, visual and interactive. The consultation will be designed to generate a strong steer on those issues that matter the most to the public and to enable the Council to sense check whether the emerging draft priorities are correct in emphasis.
- 2.4. To give the democratically elected representatives of the District's communities the opportunity to input in person, a Town and Parish Forum will be held. This will be a facilitated discussion to obtain the views of Town and Parish Council's about issues particularly relevant to their local communities. As with the digital public consultation, this is an opportunity to get an insight into local priorities and to also explore the potential for joint working between the District Council and the Town or Parish Council to address locally important issues. Where there are specific projects identified for delivering against the Council Plan priorities, these will be captured in the proposed Action Plan.
- 2.5. A stakeholder engagement event will be held for a range of organisations active in the District with remits that relate to West Oxfordshire's environment, economy and/or the community. This will provide an opportunity for the Council to benefit from their local insight and expertise, to identify where common interests lie and the potential for working jointly to deliver the priorities in the revised Council Plan.

3. NEXT STEPS AND TIMETABLE

- 3.1. Subject to the agreement of Members that a revision of the Council Plan should be undertaken and an Action Plan developed in support of this, the engagement programme to inform this should be undertaken with a view to presenting a Council Plan at Full Council in October 2022.
- 3.2. The three engagement activities will therefore be conducted as follows:
 - Joint Council Plan and Local Plan Digital Consultation: July/August 2022
 - Town and Parish Forum: August 2022
 - Stakeholder Event: August 2022
- 3.3. The outputs of the engagement programme will be analysed and these, together with contextual data on the profile of the District, will inform the development of the Council Plan.
- 3.4. On adoption of the revised Council Plan, the Action Plan will be developed specifying actions to be taken including detail on the role of the Council in this, required partner inputs, resources required and anticipated outputs with defined 'measures of success' to enable the Council to demonstrate that the Council Plan priorities are being delivered.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. There are no legal implications arising directly from this Report.

5. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 5.1. The purpose of the Council Plan is to direct effort towards priority issues and this should help ensure that resources are focussed on delivering what is most important to the Council. Any significant actions will be subject to the Council's corporate risk management approach and will, therefore, be tested in terms of risk likelihood, potential impact and identification of mitigation steps.

6. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 6.1. The pursuit of a revised Council Plan should have a positive effect in terms of its equalities impact. It will be appropriate to complete an informed Equalities Impact Assessment as the work is further specified following development of priorities in the Council Plan and plans for delivery are outlined in the supporting Action Plan.

7. CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. None arising directly from this report. Addressing the climate and ecological crisis have been identified as a priority of Cabinet and will therefore be represented as an area of focus for Council attention and investment in a revised Council Plan.

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 8.1. Not relevant

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 9.1. None.