



REPORT TO: Scrutiny and Overview Committee
LEAD OFFICER: Chief Executive

22 January 2019

Business Plan 2019-24 – consultation outcomes

Purpose

1. The Council is in the process of developing a new Business Plan for 2019-24. To give communities an opportunity to engage and shape the plan, a public consultation on the vision, four proposed priority areas and key areas of work within these was carried out between 19 November and 7 January. This has provided valuable feedback from local people, so it can be considered whilst the plan is being formulated.
2. This report provides Scrutiny and Overview Committee with a summary of the consultation responses and asks for their input and feedback, so it can also be used as part of drafting the final Business Plan for consideration by Cabinet and Council.

Recommendations

3. Scrutiny and Overview Committee:
 - (a) Review and comment on the proposed priorities that were set out in the Business Plan consultation (**appendix A**) so their views can be used to shape the final plan.
 - (b) Review the feedback from the Business Plan public consultation and provide comments to Cabinet so they can be used to shape the final Business Plan. A detailed summary of the feedback is attached (**appendix B**). An overview is also provided in the report below.

Reasons for Recommendations

4. The Business Plan sets out the overarching priorities for the Council and details the actions that are currently planned to be carried out up until 2024. The plan is updated each year. The Business Plan is used to ensure officer and financial resources are allocated appropriately to achieve the actions and objectives detailed within it.
5. The Business Plan informs the subsequent agreement of annual service plans, prepared by the Council's directorates, setting out service, team and individual objectives, aligned to the vision and aims that have been set.

Background

6. In advance of a detailed Business Plan being prepared for 2019-24, residents, businesses, parish councils, partners, councillors and staff were asked for their views on a proposed high-level set of priorities. The consultation ran for just over six weeks

and closed on 7 January. A longer consultation period than normal was carried out, so people had extra time to respond due to the Christmas and New Year period.

7. The four priority areas people were asked their views on were:
 - (a) **Economic Development** – We will support businesses of all sizes, including rural enterprise and farming, to help create new jobs and opportunities near to where people live.
 - (b) **Homes that are affordable for everyone to live in** – Our focus will be on building vibrant and healthy communities with a range of homes people can genuinely afford to live in. Our communities will have the right facilities and services and be places where people love to live, not just groups of houses.
 - (c) **Climate and Environment** – We will put the environment at the centre of everything we do to create a cleaner, greener future for our communities.
 - (d) **A 21st Century Council** – We will provide our customers with the high-quality services that we would expect ourselves, always strive to reduce costs, build on what we are good at to generate our own income and make decisions in a transparent, open and inclusive way.

8. Almost eight out of every ten people who responded agreed that each of the proposed priority areas suggested should be focused on by the Council. The percentage breakdown is below:
 - (a) Economic development (79%)
 - (b) Homes that are affordable for everyone to live in (79%)
 - (c) Climate and environment (78%)
 - (d) 21st century council (77%).

9. The survey also gave an opportunity to provide more detailed feedback on each proposed priority area. A summary to highlight key issues raised is below, with a more detailed breakdown of responses attached (see appendix B).

10. Feedback on the economic development priority showed that the most common perceived barrier to achieving the aims set out within it was transport (47%). The main theme was the need to make it easier to get to places of work without relying solely on the car. Around 10% of people also highlighted access to housing and housing affordability, availability of rural broadband and concerns over balancing growth with the need to maintain what makes South Cambridgeshire a great place to live. When asked if there was anything else that should be focussed on, transport was once again the top concern with 36% of people saying this barrier needs to be addressed. 20% of people also said that there needs to be enough emphasis in the plan on people already living and working in the district.

11. Affordability was the key issue raised when people were asked about the proposed housing priority (26% of respondents). Their views were mixed and included the need for more social housing, more help for first time buyers to get a foot on the property ladder and stepping up efforts to make homes cheaper to run through measures such as better insulation. One junior doctor said that they cannot afford to buy a home in the district and will be moving to another part of the country because of the price of housing. Transport was once again mentioned with 14% of respondents saying this is a barrier to housing that is affordable to live in. When people were asked what else the Council should focus on under the housing priority, 18% of people said transport should be more of a focus when the Council considers housing. There was a range of

responses on the best way to tackle this. They included concentrating more on delivering alternatives to the car, to making sure the car is focussed on more when housing is considered.

12. Transport was again the key focus (27%) in the responses the Council received on the climate and environment priority. The bulk of the responses centred around the need for better public transport. Waste and fly tipping was the second most popular area of response with 20% of people commenting. Responses ranged from the need for more resources to tackle fly tipping and to try and secure higher penalties, to more focus on making recycling easier. When asked what else the Council should be focusing on as part of the climate and environment priority, tackling transport issues such as better alternatives to the car (31%), investing and supporting renewable energy generation (18%) and higher quality of insulation and energy generation as standard on new homes/offices (15%) were highlighted. Improving the energy efficiency of homes and office blocks included a suggestion of the Council trying to make solar panels mandatory.
13. Under the proposed 21st century council priority, customer service was the most important area of focus (21%). Communities said they wanted the Council to be accessible and for it to be easier to contact the right person. There were also mixed responses to the use of technology for people to get things done online. There was support for investment in technology, but customers also wanted to make sure that it was still possible to speak to someone over the phone or face-to-face if necessary. When asked what other things the Council should focus on, 25% of people said the Council needs to be efficient and work smarter. People wanted to see quicker decisions and for the Council to be working with other councils to ensure no duplication of work. Although 77% of people supported the principle of the areas of work proposed under the 21st century Council priority, 12% of people questioned the title. The comments received suggest the title of this aim is confusing and many people would already expect any business to be acting in a way fit for the 21st century. The consultation demonstrates that there is a merit in updating this to better capture the overarching aims. Titling the priority 'A modern and caring Council' could be considered.
14. The consultation also asked people for their views on our budget, a proposed £5 per year increase in Council Tax for the average band D home and for comments on how the Council can bridge the funding gap due to ongoing national cuts to the grants we receive to deliver services. The most popular response (18% of respondents) was for the Council to make sure income was being generated to bridge some of the gap. 13% of people also said they were concerned about cuts to services as they did not want service quality to reduce. The consultation also saw 13% of people explicitly say they support increasing Council Tax by the amount proposed, with one respondent adding that they feel our proportion of Council Tax is too low. Only 5% of respondents said Council Tax was too high.
15. The Council took a new approach to gathering views on the Business Plan this year. Rather than asking for views on a detailed plan, which could be interpreted as complete, views were gathered in advance of the detailed plan being drafted. By asking for views on a set of high level priorities in advance of the detail being completed it has increased the number of responses we have received. Responses were also received from at least one person living or working in almost half of South Cambridgeshire communities.

16. Survey Monkey – an online tool – was used to gather feedback. Three unique links to the survey were set up to help us gather information about where respondents originated from. The most popular route for respondents was by seeing the consultation on social media – 102 responses. Second most popular was through our website (this included people who saw the consultation in South Cambs Magazine and went online), 61 responses. A further five responses originated from a direct appeal to businesses through the Council's e-newsletter.
17. The consultation also achieved feedback from a good spread of age groups. However, under 18s were under represented with only one response. Some respondents also preferred not to disclose their age range. The breakdown was:
 - (a) 18 to 35 – 18%
 - (b) 36 to 50 – 29%
 - (c) 51 to 64 – 36%
 - (d) 65 and over – 13%
18. It is recognised that the Council cannot deliver all the services which the community require and want on its own. The overarching Business Plan reflects the need to continue to work in partnership to deliver services. These include the Council's work with Registered Social Landlords to deliver the Housing Strategy, with the Police on Community Safety and as a constituent member of the Greater Cambridge Partnership and Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority.

Options

19. Scrutiny and Overview Committee is recommended to comment on the proposed priorities that were set out in the Business Plan consultation and review the feedback from the public consultation.
20. Scrutiny and Overview Committee may also choose to provide further feedback to Cabinet, so it can be considered for the final Business Plan.

Implications

21. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk management, equality and diversity, climate change, community safety and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered: -

Financial

22. The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy 2019-24 and Budget Estimates for 2019-20, take into consideration the priorities in the Council's Business Plan to make sure they can be resourced.

Legal

23. The Business Plan forms an integral part of the Council's Budget and Policy Framework and therefore is reserved for Council approval as required by the Constitution.

Risk Management

24. Once agreed, the Business Plan sets out the priorities for the Council to deliver. The actions and timescales for delivery are monitored and reported on as standard.

- Equality and Diversity**
25. Updated and new impact assessments form part of the implementation of Council actions during 2019-2020.

- Climate Change**
26. Climate and Environment is a key theme included in the Council's proposed Business Plan. It states that the Council will put the environment at the centre of everything we do to create a cleaner, greener future for our communities. Actions under the themes are being developed as part of the detailed Business Plan.

- Effect on Strategic Aims**
27. The Business Plan is the vehicle for the effective delivery of the Council's vision and strategic objectives.

Background Papers

- 28.
- (a) Draft Business Plan priorities for consultation (appendix A)
 - (b) Summary of public consultation (appendix B)
 - (c) [District Profile: An Economic, Social and Environmental Summary Profile of South Cambridgeshire \(Grant Thornton, 2017\)](#)

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