

Report to: Council

Report Ref: C1905
Meeting Date: 3rd June 2019
Agenda Item: 11
Prepared By: Town Clerk



Subject: Strategic Plan 2019-2031

1.0 BACKGROUND

1.1 INTRODUCTION

A strategic plan is the most important policy document an organisation has and a vital part of ensuring its success; without a strategic plan an organisation is akin to a ship without a rudder, lacking definition in its aims and mission, which hampers its overall efficiency and success. This makes setting a strategic plan one of Council's key responsibilities.

The effectiveness of a strategic plan relies on the buy-in of all key stakeholders: members, officers and the public, and it becomes a key tool in managing the council's performance by providing direction to members, officers and partners. Ensuring the successful delivery of the council's strategic aims is a key duty of the Town Clerk and the strategic plan forms a key part of his performance management.

1.2 2020 VISION

The Town Council adopted its first strategic plan, the 2020 Vision, in February 2014. The plan set out 13 aims and a series of actions which committees were tasked with progressing. 70% of the agreed actions have been completed or are continuous.

1.3 STRATEGIC PLAN 2019-2031

The development of a strategic plan should align with the election cycle of the council as it is vital that members are committed to delivering the adopted plan. At the same time, it is important to be strategic and look further ahead than just four years due to the time that the development of some initiatives and policies may take. It is considered that a 12-year strategic plan would enable the council to think strategically whilst also allowing reviews after each ordinary election to ensure that the plan continues to meet the needs of the town and members' objectives. A 12-year plan also accords with the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan.

The period of the plan will be a challenging and changing time for the town council. During the next four years the town council will be resuming management of the cemetery and exploring its extension, taking ownership of the council offices and likely undertaking a refurbishment and extension of it and a redevelopment of the market hall. The town will grow in this period as the first strategic sites are developed and Cheshire East Council will be undertaking a Community



Governance Review which will likely change the town boundaries and internal warding arrangements. In addition, the Neighbourhood Plan has set out a series of obligations on the town council including developing a masterplan for the town centre, conservation area appraisals and developing a preventative health strategy.

It is noted that there is currently a Local Plan, Neighbourhood Plan, Town Plan and developing Local Plan part II (Site Allocations and Development Policies Document) and that care must be given to avoiding consultation fatigue and plan-confusion. It is suggested that the working group develops a working title other than “Knutsford Town Council Strategic Plan” to create identify for this plan.

2.0 PROPOSED PROCESS

2.1 OVERVIEW

The development of a new strategic plan is divided into four sections which are detailed below. The process seeks to maximise community input and lead to the adoption of a plan within six months. It is recommended that Council establishes a working group to oversee the development of a new plan.

In summary the process is:

June and July	Evidence compiling and community engagement
August to October	Drafting of plan
October and November	Consultation
December to January	Revision and adoption of plan

2.2 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND EVIDENCE COMPILING

The foundation of any community plan (which the strategic plan of the local council unequivocally is) is early community engagement; providing an opportunity for the community to give a broad steer of their priorities at the start of the process. Such engagement becomes the building blocks of a plan.

Whilst there is already a great deal of data available, as collected in the Neighbourhood Plan consultations, the Town Plan, and other published information (demographics, community assets etc) it is considered that open early engagement would provide a targeted engagement on the role of the town council.

It is recommended that a number of workshops are held where residents will be invited to receive a short introduction to the town council and discuss a series of questions (determined by the working group) to identify the issues the community feels the town will face and its suggestions on how to tackle them. It will also seek to identify areas the community feels need attention.

Two workshops would specifically target two demographics which are traditionally harder to engage with a workshop aimed at residents aged 16-21 and a second targeting residents of Longridge and Shaw Heath. In total four workshops would be held; the aforementioned plus two general



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workshops with one held on a Saturday and one during an evening. Complementing the workshops would be an open opportunity for residents to contact the town council with their views.

The outputs of the consultation would be compiled into an issues document which would also include summary background information. The document would include a summary of uncompleted actions from the 2010 Town Plan and the aspirations of the Neighbourhood Plan. The issues document would then be published online and circulated to members.

2.3 PLAN DRAFTING

Member workshops would be held to discuss member priorities and to review the issues document. A SWOT analysis to identify the strengths and weakness of the council and the perceived threats and opportunities over the plan period would be undertaken. An officer workshop would also take place with a SWOT analysis and suggestions being made to the working group based on the issues document.

The workshops would enable the working group to draw up an overarching mission statement, strategic priorities and a series of aims. The existing council services will be mapped to the new aims and anything which doesn't fit will be discussed. This will be developed into the first draft plan and presented to Council for consultation approval in early October.

2.4 CONSULTATION

The draft plan will be put out for public consultation for six weeks starting in October. The public will be invited to provide feedback on the priorities and aims and encouraged to suggest how the council might seek to achieve aims.

The consultation would take the form of a written feedback consultation (online and letters) and an evening workshop where the plan would be presented, and comments invited from tables.

2.5 REVISION AND ADOPTION

All feedback received by through the consultation would be reviewed by the Strategic Planning working group who will produce a revised draft for adoption. This will be presented to Council in January 2020 for approval.

The final plan would include action plans to guide implementation and ensure that council works to achieve its ambitions.

It is noted that there has been discussion in relation to changes to the council's committee structure and it is considered that a committee structure review would fit naturally as part of developing a new strategic plan to ensure that the council's establishment is designed to deliver the plan in the most efficient way possible.

3.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS



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The development of a new strategic plan will have minor financial implications limited to the costs of public consultation. It is anticipated that the costs for this will be in the region of £750 to cover room hire and refreshments for the public workshops and meetings.

The development of the plan will have moderate resource implications in the form of member and officer time. Member time will be focused on the working group with additional

4.0 RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that:

- a) Council approves the process for the development of a new strategic plan covering the period 2019-2031
- b) Appoints a Strategic Planning working group to lead on the development of a plan
- c) Authorises the Town Clerk to undertake the community engagement and evidence compiling in consultation with the working group

APPENDIX A: WORKING GROUP TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. The Working Group will consist of 5 councillors determined by Council, and the Town Clerk in an advisory capacity.
2. Membership is to be set by Council at its first meeting at start of a new civic year.
3. At its first meeting (or first in a new civic year) the working group members shall:
 - a. Review these terms of reference for approval as appropriate.
 - b. Appoint an elected member as Lead Member who should ensure the entire working group's members are kept informed and involved with progress and act as the primary reporting channel back to the parent body.
4. In line with the task set by Council, the purpose and remit of the working group is to:
 - a. Oversee the development of a Strategic Plan covering the period 2019-2031
5. The group does not have delegated powers to make decisions on behalf of the Town Council nor should exceed its purpose and remit (above) without Council's sanction to a change to this Terms of Reference
6. The group reports to the Council
7. The group shall provide timely reports to Council in the following manner:
 - a. Verbal updates when necessary
 - b. A draft plan in October 2019
 - c. A final draft plan in January 2020
8. Meetings of the working group are not usually but may be public meetings.



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