

Date of Meeting: 1 October 2019

Cabinet Members: Cllr Spencer Flower, Leader
Cllr Peter Wharf, Cabinet Member for Corporate Development and Change
Cllr Tony Ferrari, Cabinet Member for Finance, Commercial and Assets

Local Member(s): All

Lead Officer: Aidan Dunn, Executive Director of Corporate Development

Executive Summary:

This report presents the draft of Dorset Council's first ever whole-council plan. It sets out the council's vision, ambitions and priorities, and some of the key activities that services will undertake to deliver them.

It has been led by portfolio holders and cabinet, influenced by a whole-councillor seminar on 2 September, and supported by officers. The views of residents and partners will be sought during a public conversation from October - December 2019, before being submitted to full council for approval on 13 February 2020.

Councillors are asked to approve the draft plan attached at appendix 1, and the engagement process set out in section 5 below.

Equalities Impact Assessment:

An assessment of the impact of the public conversation, which will take place from October - December 2019, is attached at appendix 4.

Budget:

Financial information, including development of the medium-term financial plan (MTFP) is set out in this report.

Risk Assessment:

Having considered the risks associated with this decision, the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Low

Residual Risk: Low

Climate implications:

One of the priorities includes taking action to mitigate climate change.

Other Implications:

The council plan has implications for all our residents and partners. Their views will be sought during a public conversation from October - December 2019.

Recommendation: That the Cabinet:

1. Approves the draft Council Plan 2020-2024, attached at appendix 1, for engagement in accordance with the next steps set out in section 5 of this report.
2. Notes the output from the councillor seminar on 2 September (appendix 2, 'you said, we did').
3. Approves and promotes the briefing pack for parish and town councils (appendix 3) as part of the public conversation.
4. Notes the equality impact assessment and suggests any additional activity required to ensure the conversation is as inclusive as possible (appendix 4).

Reason for Recommendation:

To ensure Dorset Council's inaugural plan is informed by local people and the council's partners.

Appendices:

1. Dorset Council's draft plan
2. You said, we did: feedback from the councillor workshop 2 September 2019
3. Information pack for parish and town councils
4. Equality impact assessment

Background Papers:

None

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1. Background

- 1.1 Dorset Council came into being on 1 April 2019 to:
- Protect frontline services by reducing costs;
 - Give Dorset a stronger voice nationally, helping to attract business investment, government funding and support local economic growth; and
 - Better meet the needs of communities by bringing all services together.
- 1.2 The creation of the new council has enabled it to:
- Reduce the number of councillors from 204 to 82, saving £400,000 per year;
 - Reduce the number of senior management roles and staffing costs, saving £5.2m in 2019/20; and
 - Reduce the costs of insurance, audit fees and other activities where the council now only pays for one organisation.
- 1.3 Despite this, the council faces significant challenges, mainly due to:
- An increasing need for support for children with special educational needs and disabilities;
 - The rising number of children taken into care to keep them safe; and
 - Increased demand for social care for vulnerable older people and people with disabilities.
- 1.4 The council's response to these opportunities and challenges is set out in its first ever whole-council draft plan, attached at appendix 1.

2. Dorset Council's Draft Plan

- 2.1 Dorset Council's draft plan sets out its vision, ambitions and priorities. It is one of three documents including the budget and transformation plan (which are both in development) that will form the council's business plan from 2020-2024.
- 2.2 Following discussions with councillors, the new council's proposed vision is '*Dorset - a great place to live, work and visit*'. It is underpinned by five priorities:
- 2.2.1 Economic growth
 - 2.2.2 Unique environment
 - 2.2.3 Suitable housing
 - 2.2.4 Strong, healthy communities
 - 2.2.5 Staying safe and well
- 2.3 Each priority is cross-cutting and will involve collaborative cross-directorate and partnership working.
- 2.4 It has been led by portfolio holders, the cabinet, and discussions with councillors, including a councillor seminar on 2 September.
- 2.5 The seminar was attended by approximately half of the 82 councillors, who engaged in an interactive session, commenting on each of the draft priorities at 2.2 above, and

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setting out their views and ambitions for the council and county as a whole. The output from the seminar is being used in three ways:

- To update the draft priorities in the draft council plan (appendix 1);
- To inform strategies that are currently or soon to be in development (as detailed in appendix 2); and
- To inform directorate and service plans as they are developed for 2020-21, having been shared with corporate directors.

2.6 The plan does not yet contain measures. Once the priorities have been agreed, measures will be developed with portfolio holders, the cabinet and lead officers, and monitored by the Overview and Scrutiny and Audit and Governance Committees.

3. Budget and medium-term financial plan (MTFP)

3.1 The first Dorset Council budget for the 2019/20 financial year was approved at shadow cabinet on 20 February 2019. The covering report explained the key principles in developing the budget, directed by councillors:

- To avoid using one-off sources of funding to support ongoing expenditure;
- To set solid financial foundations for creating a financially sustainable council;
- To deliver the estimated £13.6m savings from the local partnership business case; and
- To ensure there are resources to fund transformation to address the predicted budget gaps.

3.2 The MTFP is currently in development for a ten-year period, with budget demands, pressures and risks being identified, as well as transformation savings, tactical savings and other opportunities to reduce costs and generate income. A Base Budget Review exercise is also being undertaken alongside building the MTFP as part of the 2020/21 budget setting process.

3.3 Information required to produce the MTFP is still emerging. We have had an initial spending review announcement but we await the detail and clarity around much of this. However, an early version of the MTFP was made available to Councillors at a seminar on 2 September as a budget simulator in order to perform 'what if' variance scenario modelling at this early stage.

3.4 The budget for 2020-21 will go to full council as part of the Business Plan – including the whole-council plan and the transformation programme – in February 2020.

4 The Transformation Plan

4.1 The council's transformation plan is in development and will be informed by the council's priorities and plan. Its purpose is to allow us to plan change carefully, and allocate the right resources at the right time.

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4.2 The plan will be grouped into six cross-cutting programmes. They are:

- **One council service reform** – rethinking our services and using co-design with our residents and partners
- **Customer service** – understanding customer journeys and making services accessible
- **Travel and transport** – improving integrated travel options for residents of all ages and in all communities
- **Property and estates** - delivering services in the right place, by making best physical and financial use of our estate
- **Employer of choice** – working together to maximise our workforce potential, shape our culture and help our people to adapt to, and engage, in change
- **Efficient organisation** – modernising the way we work so we are leaner, and more modern and digital in the way we deliver services across the council.

4.3 The transformation plan will form part of the business plan, including the budget and whole-council plan, that will go to full council in February 2020.

5 Next Steps

5.1 The draft council plan will be subject to a public conversation from October - December 2019. The objectives of the conversation are to:

- Request input from residents, partners and colleagues on priorities for the next four years;
- Raise awareness of the council's role and budget pressures; and
- Initiate a conversation about developing independent and healthy communities, now and into the future.

5.2 The conversation will use a variety of consultation methods, including workshops with specified groups (for example, young people, black and minority ethnic groups), an on-line survey and an article in the Dorset Council newsletter.

5.3 An equality impact assessment has been undertaken and an action plan drafted to ensure the conversation is inclusive and reaches as many groups and residents as possible (appendix 4). This process will inform the EqlA of the plan itself, and will accompany the plan to full council on 13 February.

5.4 A presentation has been developed for use with parish and town councils (appendix 3), which cabinet is asked to approve and promote.

5.5 Feedback from the conversation will be incorporated into the draft plan in preparation for full council on 13 February 2020.

5.6 The critical path for the adoption of the business plan as a whole is:

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