

Cabinet

16 December 2019

Feedback from Public Engagement – Council Plan 2025

Recommendations

That Cabinet:

- 1) Receives the key messages and conclusions from the public engagement programme which will inform the further development of the Council Plan 2025.
- 2) Endorses the next steps for the development of the Council Plan 2025.

1.0 Background

- 1.1. At the 12 September 2019 meeting, Cabinet approved the process and timetable for developing the Council Plan 2025, including the arrangements for public engagement.
- 1.2. This report updates Cabinet on the outcome of that engagement and its impact on the development of the Council Plan, and the next steps.

2.0 Engagement Process

- 2.1 To support the Council Plan development a programme of engagement with the public and key stakeholders was delivered during September and October 2019. The aim of this was to:
 - Understand levels of support for the proposed outcomes and objectives which will drive the plan.
 - Gather feedback on public and stakeholder priorities across objectives.
 - Yield specific suggestions to inform the work of the Climate Change Task and Finish Group to develop an action plan following the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency.

Engagement methods:

- An engagement questionnaire available online at Warwickshire County Council's engagement hub 'Ask Warwickshire' and by telephone/email request as a paper version or in alternative formats. Paper surveys could be returned via a free business reply service or dropped off at any Warwickshire library.
- Nine roadshows held across the county where people could talk to councillors and council officers, complete a short questionnaire and participate in an

interactive voting activity. Locations were: Bedworth, Southam, Warwick, Leamington, Atherstone, Coleshill, Stratford upon Avon, Nuneaton and Rugby.

- Direct feedback invited to be sent by post or email.

- 2.2 To raise awareness of the public engagement activities, the Council worked with Touch FM, who promoted the engagement on air and social media throughout the engagement period.
- 2.3 In addition, engagement activities were promoted through Council communication channels including, but not limited to Warwickshire Means Business, Warwickshire News, Working for Warwickshire, social media platforms, and Directorate communications.
- 2.4 A dedicated landing page on Ask Warwickshire provided information on the engagement, roadshows and survey and an alert was sent to 718 'Ask Warwickshire' subscribers.
- 2.5 An email was sent to 150 named key stakeholders including: Leaders and Chief Executives of neighbouring authorities and Warwickshire district and borough councils; parish councils; health representatives; universities and education; Warwickshire and West Mercia Police; the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner; Coventry and Warwickshire LEP; business representatives including the Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce, the Institute of Directors, and the Federation of Small Businesses (Coventry and Warwickshire); and Warwickshire Third and Public Sector Partnership Board members.
- 2.6 Emails and alerts were sent to Localities and Partnerships mailing lists and through Warwickshire County Council contacts and networks including but not restricted to children, families and young people, adult social care and waste and environment. The engagement was also promoted on social media by the Family Information Service.
- 2.7 In total 1,112 engagement questionnaires were completed, and 826 people completed a shorter questionnaire at the roadshows. Further feedback was gathered via the other roadshow methods, and four responses were received by email or in writing.
- 2.8 The Council Plan 2025 engagement process differed from that for OOP2020 as the previous engagement used a paper based and online budget simulator and not a questionnaire. Although not directly comparable, for information: 639 people provided feedback on OOP 2020 priorities at the supporting roadshows; 557 accessed the online budget simulator; in total 242 online budget simulator responses were submitted together with 42 paper responses.
- 2.9 This report provides a summary of the key messages from the engagement. More detailed analysis is available in **Appendix 1** (Analysis of the Council Plan 2025 Engagement Questionnaire) and **Appendix 2** (Field Engagement Report on the roadshows).

3.0 Overall key messages

- 3.1 The proposed strategic objectives appear to align well with respondents' views on what is important or very important. The objective with the least level of support was 'Supporting communities/businesses to develop digital skills and tools.' This was still identified as important or very important by 56% of questionnaire respondents.
- 3.2 Support for vulnerable children and adults was a key priority for the majority of both questionnaire and roadshow respondents. Interestingly, while over half of questionnaire respondents felt that 'Supporting our vulnerable and disadvantaged children' should be a top three priority (54%) a smaller proportion (33%) of respondents placed 'Supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged adults' in their top three.
- 3.3 Transport and Highways was also a key concern. This was identified by the majority of questionnaire respondents as important or very important and just under a third of both questionnaire respondents and roadshow respondents said it was a top three priority. It is important to note that concern was not only in terms of the highway network but significantly, access to public transport and active travel options.
- 3.4 Increasing re-use, recycling and compost rates and reducing waste was also identified as a priority by many people, with 37.5% of questionnaire respondents placing it in their top three priorities (second only to supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged children).
- 3.5 Feedback from both the questionnaire and roadshows illustrates there is significant concern about climate change and the environment and detail provided by questionnaire respondents includes transport (particularly public transport, active transport and electric vehicles), road networks and traffic, recycling/reduction of waste and energy efficiency/renewable energy sources.
- 3.6 Half of all questionnaire respondents selected Education as one of their top three services to spend more on should finances be better than predicted.
- 3.7 The two services most likely to be selected as 'number 1' for increasing spend if extra money was available were Children's Services (18.6%) and Transport and Highways (18.5%) reinforcing the feedback received about people's objectives and priorities.
- 3.8 People were least likely to support giving additional money to Customer Services or Resources and Support Services. Correspondingly these were the two services most frequently selected to have spending reduced should finances prove worse than expected. Comments suggest that people expect Resources and Support to be as efficient as possible as a matter of course and think there is scope to make

greater savings in this area (see **Appendix 1**). While more than three quarters of questionnaire respondents selected Customer Services as one of their top three services to spend less on there is insufficient narrative detail to draw conclusions in relation to this.

- 3.9 In line with feedback on priorities the most frequently selected service for reducing expenditure if needed, after Customer Services and Resources and Support Services, was Economic Growth with just under half of respondents (49%) placing this in their top three services to spend less on.

4.0 Engagement questionnaire – feedback on proposed strategic objectives

- 4.1 The questionnaire outlined the proposed strategic objectives. Respondents were asked firstly to indicate whether they felt each objective was not important, of little importance, important or very important and secondly to identify their top three most important objectives.

Table1: Strategic objectives outlined in questionnaire

Supporting our most vulnerable and disadvantaged children, providing early support, before situations become complex.	Attracting economic investment and maximising employment rates, business growth and skill levels in Warwickshire.
Supporting the most vulnerable and disadvantaged adults to enjoy life, achieve, and live independently.	Increasing reuse, recycling and composting rates and reduce waste across Warwickshire.
Supporting residents to take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing and reduce the need for hospital or long-term health care.	Managing and maintaining Warwickshire's transport network in a safe, sustainable and integrated way.
Supporting and enabling children and young people to access a high quality education setting and achieve their full potential.	Working with communities to promote safety, prevent harm and reduce crime and disorder.
Supporting communities and businesses to develop the digital skills and tools they need in a digital economy.	Managing the Council's resources efficiently <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Making it easy for customers to access information and services. - Putting resources in the right place to support priorities and balance the books - Developing the workforce so it has the right skills and capabilities. - Reducing demand and cost; leadership and high performance).

Importance of objectives

- 4.2 With the exception of one objective, 80% or more respondents felt those identified were important or very important.
- 4.3 The least selected objective, 'Supporting communities and businesses to develop digital skills and tools', was still identified as important or very important by more than half of respondents (56.8%).
- 4.4 'Increasing reuse, recycling and composting rates & reducing waste' was identified by the most people as being very important (57.3%).
- 4.5 'Managing the Council's resources efficiently' was the second most frequently marked as very important (56.3%).
- 4.6 Over 90% of questionnaire respondents said 'Managing and maintaining Warwickshire's transport network' was either important or very important. Nearly 40% of general comments made on all objectives were in relation to Transport and Highways, reinforcing this importance. A key theme in these comments was public transport and active travel, mentioned in just over 22% of all comments made on the overall objectives (see **Appendix 1** for examples of comments).

Prioritising objectives

- 4.7 The greatest number of respondents felt 'Supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged children' should be a top three priority (54.2%).
- 4.8 The objective prioritised by the least number of respondents was 'Supporting communities / businesses to develop digital skills and tools' (3.33%).
- 4.9 Other key 'top three' priorities identified were:
- 'Increasing reuse, recycling and compositing and managing waste' (37.59%)
 - 'Supporting / enabling young people to access high quality education and achieve their potential' (35.61%);
 - 'Supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged adults' (33.09%); and
 - 'Managing and maintaining the transport network' (35.61%).
- 4.10 Climate change was a key area of concern and the second most prevalent theme in comments on objectives (20.6%). It was also the third most commented on theme in general comments after Transport and Highways and better management of Council resources. Further details are available in section 5.
- 4.11 The engagement questionnaire highlighted differences in priorities based on place of residence or work, principally:
- Respondents in Stratford on Avon were significantly more likely to prioritise 'Supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged children' than those in North Warwickshire.

- Respondents in North Warwickshire were more likely to prioritise promoting safety and reducing crime and disorder than in Warwick District.
- Attracting economic investment, business and employment growth and increasing skills was more of a priority for Nuneaton and Bedworth respondents.
- Managing and maintaining Warwickshire's transport network was a greater priority for respondents in North Warwickshire and Warwick District than Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough.
- Respondents in Rugby Borough were more likely to prioritise 'Increasing reuse, recycling and composting rates and reducing waste' than in Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough.

This correlates with our understanding of the different challenges faced in the north and south of the county and our promotion of economic growth and sustainability.

5.0 Roadshows – feedback on strategic objectives

5.1 A series of roadshows were held across Warwickshire to find out more about what local people would prioritise and what they felt was important locally. Locations were chosen by high footfall and a diverse audience was engaged with. People were asked to identify their top three priorities from the following options and to make any additional comments they wished:

- | | |
|---|------------------|
| • Social care for adults and children | • Recycling |
| • Public health and wellbeing | • Transport |
| • Safety | • Education |
| • Economy – business support, training and investment | • Climate change |

5.2 Anecdotal feedback indicates people were happy to have been given the opportunity to contribute, particularly in the north of the county. A key outcome of the roadshows was the opportunity for people to meet and talk to Councillors but valuable information on priorities was also gathered. Key aspects of this are summarised here with a full report available in **Appendix 2**.

5.3 Roadshow feedback shows that activities focused on people such as social care, education and health and wellbeing were most frequently selected as 'top three priorities' across most districts.

5.4 In line with the questionnaire economy and business support appear to be a lower priority, with only 14.7% of respondents placing this in their top three. This was consistently rated as the lowest priority for roadshow respondents across all geographic areas.

5.5 Other top three priorities included safety (38.4%) and transport (31.4%).

- 5.6 Priorities were fairly consistent across roadshows in different districts and boroughs. However, as with the questionnaire safety is a particularly important priority in North Warwickshire with more than half of respondents (51.8%) placing this in their top three.
- 5.7 Roadshow feedback reinforces questionnaire responses in terms of the importance of climate change and environmental issues, with climate and recycling both identified by nearly 23% of people as a top three priority.
- 5.8 Many of the additional comments made at roadshows were about local issues (see **Appendix 2**). Whilst the number of comments recorded is low, there appears to be alignment with areas of concern highlighted in the questionnaire. Key points to note are:
- Comments were made about roads and transport across all areas, reinforcing this as a key issue for people. In North Warwickshire and Nuneaton and Bedworth concern appears to be more frequently in relation to public transport, while in Warwick and Stratford comments were more frequently made about traffic and congestion.
 - Housing and development were mentioned in most areas (less in North Warwickshire and Rugby), mostly emphasising pressures on green areas and the local infrastructure. Interestingly in Warwick there were a number of comments made with regard to affordability of housing, an issue not raised in other areas.
 - People across all areas referred to concerns in relation to the quality of their town centre and local amenities. This was a particular issue in Nuneaton and Bedworth.
 - Safety was referred to in a number of comments made by residents in North Warwickshire and some in Nuneaton and Bedworth. There were also a number of comments made on safety in Stratford on Avon.
 - Respondents across all areas in the north of the county referred to a north / south divide and perceived inequalities across this.

6.0 Feedback on Climate Change

6.1 The engagement questionnaire asked:

- What three things could Warwickshire County Council do to help you (or your community or business) to reduce your carbon footprint? 827 respondents provided a response to this question.
- What three things do you think are most important for Warwickshire County Council to address to reduce its carbon footprint? 935 respondents provided a response to this question.

Over 5,000 comments were made in answer to these. A full analysis is available in **Appendix 1**.

6.2 In response to the question 'What three things could WCC do to help you (or your community or business) to reduce your carbon footprint' key themes were:

- **Transport** - Suggestions relating to transport were made with high frequency. The most frequently mentioned subthemes were in relation to public transport and active travel which are mentioned 597 times. Other subthemes relating to transport were the need to improve the network to reduce congestion and therefore pollution, initiatives to reduce traffic, and comments around parking provision such as park and ride schemes. In all transport related issues were mentioned a total of 704 times. Additionally, comments relating to electric and hybrid vehicles were made 128 times.
- **Recycling and waste management** - Comments were also frequently made including 265 comments specifically on recycling, including the importance of increasing recycling and improving the current system and the need for greater assurance as to what happens with recycled goods. Suggestions were also made on working with businesses to encourage less single use of plastics.
- **Energy use and efficiency** - Interventions such as advice, incentives and grants were highlighted in 138 comments and further comments were also made about how WCC could support local renewable energy creation.
- **Behavioural change** - There were also a number of comments which highlighted the role WCC could play in bringing about behavioural change through education and information (108 comments) and incentives and rewards (60 comments).
- Other suggestions mentioned with similar frequency included: better planning of new developments, protection of the green belt and planting of trees and wildflower verges; support for sustainable communities, keeping things local and self-help projects such as 'grow your own'; and promotion of different working practices.

6.3 Responses to the question 'What three things do you think are most important for Warwickshire County Council to address to reduce its carbon footprint' reflected similar themes to those above. Key themes were:

- **Transport** – Comments suggested improvements to public transport and encouraging greater use of this and active transport (cycling and walking). People also commented on traffic volume and congestion and made suggestions in relation to this including restrictions in town centres, park and ride facilities and car sharing schemes. In line with the previous question greater use of electric and hybrid vehicles was also a theme.
- **Recycling and waste management** – The key focus for comments was encouraging and improving recycling for residents and staff. The importance of reducing single use plastic / plastic free initiatives was also highlighted both for the Council's own purposes and in terms of the Council's ability to encourage / facilitate businesses and residents to take action.

- **Energy use and generation** – Comments expressed support for using and producing renewable energy sources and avoiding wasted energy, again both in terms of the Council's own buildings and its ability to influence businesses and residents.
- **Staff working practices** – The Council was encouraged to enable alternative ways of working to minimise climate and environmental impact. This included flexible working, reduced travel to meetings using video conferencing and ensuring less paper is used.

- 6.4 Other suggestions included; making proactive environmental improvements, including management of new developments to safeguard and enhance the environment; and ensuring carbon footprint considerations were included in policy development, procurement and planning.
- 6.5 In addition to the specific questions asked on climate change it is clear from overall comments made by questionnaire respondents that climate change is an area of concern with over 20% of initial comments made in relation to overall objectives related to climate change and the environment and 12.5% of further comments made at the end of the survey related to climate change, sustainability and the environment (**see Appendix 1**). Many of these reflect a view that it should be given greater priority in County Council planning.
- 6.6 The public response on climate change has clearly been significant and has been considered by Corporate Board. It is their recommendation that Cabinet consider how Climate Change is included in the Council Plan 2025.

7.0 Conclusions and next steps

- 7.1 Following the engagement programme a draft of the Council Plan 2025 will be developed and provided for Cabinet and Council for consideration in the New Year 2020.
- 7.2 Engagement from engagement activities will be fully considered when developing the Council Plan, particularly the following messages:
- Overall there is broad public and stakeholder support for all the proposed strategic objectives.
 - Climate change and the environmental issues (including recycling) are a significant concern for people and should be reflected within the Council Plan. This could be either as an additional strategic objective or as an overarching area of focus across activities.
 - Support for vulnerable and disadvantaged adults and children is seen as a key priority by most people and there is strong support for additional funding of this if available.
 - Education is also a key priority and investment in this area would be welcomed.
 - People feel strongly about transport (including public transport), highways and active and sustainable transport at a wider strategic and environmental level as well as locally. This was also identified within the feedback as an area where additional investment would be supported.

- People expect Warwickshire County Council services to be delivered as efficiently and cost effectively as possible.

8.0 Financial Implications

- 8.1 There are no direct financial implications for the authority as a result of this report. However, the Council Plan 2020-25 and partner Medium Term Financial Strategy to be approved by Council in February 2020 will take into account the information and direction of travel highlighted in this report. These documents provide the cornerstone of the Council's budget and policy framework and will be fundamental to ensuring that we remain financially sustainable and are able to deliver on our ambitions for the residents of Warwickshire.

9.0 Environmental Implications

- 9.1 The environmental issues raised by the public engagement and their implications are included elsewhere in this report.

Background Papers

None

Appendices

1. Analysis of the Council Plan 2026 Engagement Questionnaire, Warwickshire County Council Business Intelligence Service
2. Field Engagement report on the roadshows, Beehive
3. Council Plan 2025 engagement tool

	Name	Contact Information
Report Author	Lucy Rumble	lucyrumble@warwickshire.gov.uk
Assistant Director	Steve Smith	stevesmithps@warwickshire.gov.uk
Strategic Director	Rob Powell	robpowell@warwickshire.gov.uk
Portfolio Holder	Cllr. Kam Kaur	cllrkaur@warwickshire.gov.uk

This report was not circulated to members prior to publication.