

## Cabinet

### Developing Our Council Plan 2022

7 December 2021

#### Recommendation(s)

1. Cabinet considers the messages from the Public Engagement exercise and the State of Warwickshire reports as presented in this report, and from the Covid 19 Recovery Closure report presented to the same agenda in relation to the development of the Council Plan and Medium-Term Financial Strategy
2. Cabinet considers the draft Council Plan 2022-2027 attached at Appendix 1, endorses the proposed Areas of Focus, and supports the next steps for finalising the Council Plan as set out in this report.

#### 1. Background

- 1.1 The Council Plan sets our ambition, direction, and strategy for both Warwickshire and the County Council.
- 1.2 The current Council Plan was agreed in February 2020 and has been in place for 18 months. Shortly after the Plan was approved, the Covid19 Pandemic struck and necessitated the development of our Recovery Plan.
- 1.3 Following an intense period of Covid response beginning in March 2020, a recovery approach was developed over the Summer with input from cross-party member working groups. Cabinet subsequently approved the Council's Covid-19 Recovery Plan in September 2020. Progress on the Recovery Plan has since been reported to Cabinet and to all Overview & Scrutiny Committees (OSCs).
- 1.4 The planned refresh of the Council Plan in February 2021 was therefore postponed to allow a substantive review over 2021/22.
- 1.5 At its meeting of 8 July 2021, Cabinet approved the approach to this redevelopment of the Council Plan 2022-2027 as part of a comprehensive Integrated Planning approach. At this meeting Cabinet also supported the top-level vision and strategic priorities for the Council as set out at **paragraph 3.8** below and included in the draft Council Plan 2022 - 2027 attached to this report.

- 1.6 Subsequently, work has been underway to develop the Plan and all associated elements. This has included the Member Working group on the new Performance Management Framework; public and partner engagement on the proposed Areas of Focus and analysis of the Covid Recovery Plan and the aligned work supporting the development of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).
- 1.7 This report brings these elements together and presents Cabinet with:
- The draft Council Plan 2022-27 (Appendix 1)
  - The draft State of Warwickshire evidence base (Appendix 2)
  - The analysis of the public engagement exercise (Appendix 3) [Link here](#)
- 1.8. The report should be read alongside the separate reports on the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and Covid 19 Recovery Plan Closure.

## 2. Our Approach

- 2.1 Our approach to developing the new Council Plan this year is fully integrated and can be described as - **One Council, One Plan, One Budget**.
- 2.2 Our Council Plan will communicate our priorities over the next 5 years. It will do this with simplicity, making sense of the complexity of all the connected issues and ensuring flexibility in approach to respond to changing external conditions.
- 2.3 Our Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) will translate the direction set out in the Council Plan into a sustainable financial strategy.
- 2.4 These two key products will be supported by:
- The **State of Warwickshire** evidence base and look ahead to 2050
  - A rolling two-year **Delivery Plan** which builds upon the Covid 19 Recovery Plan and sets out specific and trackable actions, and which will provide the public with a clear programme of deliverables against the strategic ambitions set out in the Council Plan, improving transparency and accountability
  - A suite of **Integrated Business Frameworks** covering Risk, Performance Management, Business Planning, Consultation & Engagement, and our Strategies
- 2.5 The following sections of the report present Cabinet with the latest position on these.

### **3. Our Council Plan**

- 3.1 The purpose of the Council Plan is to set out the top-level strategic direction of the Council and to articulate the Council's vision and ambition for Warwickshire.
- 3.2 Our new Council Plan and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) is responding to:
- A changeable and uncertain external environment.
  - National policy drivers relating to Climate change, the forthcoming Levelling Up White Paper and Health & Social Care reform.
  - The pressing issues and concerns of residents and businesses as highlighted through our public engagement survey (see Section 4.0)
  - The Council's climate emergency declaration and our commitments and aspirations in relation to climate change.
  - The ongoing focus on maintaining and supporting our recovery from Covid.
  - Reducing resources, increasing demand and cost pressures and supply challenges.
- 3.3 Our new Council Plan and Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) reflects:
- Strong foundations and a continuation of work we have started
  - Joining up, connecting, and working as One Council to focus our collective efforts
  - A renewed focus on prioritisation as the way to balance demand with available resource and funding
  - Our commitment to working with partners and communities to identify solutions to the challenges we face; to build on existing strengths and successes and to learn and improve from our experiences.
- 3.4 Our Vision, high-level strategic priorities and Areas of Focus are set out in the box below.
- 3.5 The Vision and Strategic Priorities were reaffirmed by Cabinet in July, adding a new priority focusing specifically on sustainability and our response to climate change.
- 3.6 The Areas of Focus are presented today following public and partner engagement and significant discussion within the organisation. The presents a distilled and simplified version of the original 18 on which we engaged publicly, reflecting the feedback we received and further consideration and refinement by the Leadership Team. The resulting Areas of Focus reflect a commitment to produce a sharp and focused Council Plan for 2022-27 which sets out our organisational priorities and which is built on simplicity and clarity.

- 3.7 Reflecting changes and developments at an international, national, regional level we have strengthened and integrated the focus on climate change, community power and levelling up as the foundational themes of the plan.

**Our Vision:**

**To make Warwickshire the best it can be, sustainable now and for future generations.**

**Our Strategic Priorities:**

- **Vibrant Economy & Places:** *Right jobs, training, future skills, education, infrastructure and places.*
- **Best Lives:** *Communities and individuals supported to live safely, healthily, happily and independently; and*
- **Sustainable Futures:** *Adapting to and mitigating climate change and meeting net zero commitments.*

Our priorities will be supported by seven areas of focus:

**Our Areas of Focus**

1. Create vibrant places with safe and inclusive communities
2. Deliver major infrastructure, digital connectivity and improved transport options
3. Promote inclusive, sustainable economic growth, successful business and future skills
4. Tackle Climate Change and deliver on our commitment to net zero
5. Deliver our Child Friendly Warwickshire Strategy– Happy, healthy, safe children
6. Enable and support children and young people to have a high-quality education to achieve their potential and transform our Special Educational Needs and Disabilities provision.
7. Support people to live healthy, happy, and independent lives and work with partners to reduce health inequalities

We will deliver our priorities by being a **Great Council and Partner** - enabled by our use of resources, people, customer experience, data, digital and innovative ways of working.

- a) Harnessing Community Power
- b) Our people and the way we work
- c) Using and data and digital solutions to improve service delivery

- 3.8 These Areas of Focus have been shaped and supported by the following three key elements that are also presented to Cabinet today with **Appendices 2 and 3** [Link here](#) and in the associated reports.

### **State of Warwickshire**

- The State of Warwickshire report has been designed to provide the evidence base to the Council Plan, based upon the Strategic Priorities and Areas of Focus above.
- It reflects a broad range of data and analysis related to our priorities as well as beginning to look towards 2050 and future scenarios.
- A full draft is available as a linked document as part of the Council Plan papers presented in **Appendix 2**.
- Summary of the key challenges and opportunities will be included on the final version of the Council Plan.

### **Feedback from public engagement exercise**

- In September 2021 we issued the public engagement on the Council Plan content and the detailed future focus of the Council.
- Following development with the Council's Leadership Team over the Summer, 18 potential Areas of Focus were presented within the questionnaire that was shared with the public, partners, and staff.
- The majority of respondents felt that all proposed strategic objectives were either important or very important. This strongly supports and reinforces the overall shape of the plan, but feedback also stressed the importance of clarity, simplicity and focus which has led to a change in approach and the proposed combination of the objectives into seven Areas of Focus for the plan.
- The full report, referred as **Appendix 3** is accessed [Here](#) and feedback summarised below:
- There was some variation in views in relation to specific themes as set out below. However, it should be noted that these are relative comparisons and overall, all the proposed themes were important.
  - Within the 'Vibrant Economy' priority, respondents were most likely to say educational attainment was important and least likely to say a connected county was important.
  - In terms of the 'Best Lives' priority, respondents felt safe communities was the most important theme, while developing

- the conditions for a community powered Warwickshire was the least important.
- Within the 'Sustainable Futures' priority, respondents felt biodiversity was the most important theme while being a net zero council was the least important.
- The survey also identified the specific actions respondents felt the Council should prioritise to help achieve the priorities.
    - Within the 'Vibrant economy and places' priority, the most common responses related to investment in and improvement of sustainable (public) travel and transport options (e.g. walking, cycling) and access to quality education (including good schools, learning, development and training opportunities).
    - In terms of 'Best lives, the most common responses related to promotion/support for health and wellbeing initiatives (e.g., physical exercise, mental health) and investment in/support for children/young people (youth service provision).
    - When considering 'Sustainable Futures', respondents feel the actions Warwickshire County Council should focus on included investment in/improvement of sustainable or 'green' (public) travel and transport options (e.g. walking, cycling); general environmental concerns (e.g. importance of green spaces, wildlife, cleanliness, pollution concerns); and focus on/support for/investment in renewable energy schemes/initiatives.
  - We also took the opportunity to ask what respondents felt should be the Council's priorities over the longer term, specifically 'what three things do you think could improve life in Warwickshire for future generations'. The most common response was around investment in/improvement of sustainable 'green' (public) travel and transport options (e.g. walking, cycling). Other frequently mentioned themes included: general environmental-related concerns (e.g., importance of green spaces, wildlife, cleanliness, pollution concerns), and the importance of education and skills (including good schools, learning, development and training opportunities).

### **Messages from Covid Recovery Programme**

- The detailed Covid 19 Recovery Closure Report is presented separately to Cabinet on the same agenda.
- This summarises the achievements and progress made and highlights where the work will continue into the new Delivery Plan to ensure we continue to address the needs of Warwickshire and its residents in relation to Covid 19.
- A summary will be included in the final Council Plan.

## 4 Our supporting elements

- 4.1 There are a number of integrated and supporting products in development that will accompany and support the Council Plan. Progress against each is set out below:

**Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS)** -The emerging MTFS is presented to Cabinet in a separate report on this agenda. This provides the detailed phasing for funding and resourcing our priorities.

**Delivery Programme** - The intention is to create a single integrated delivery programme for the next two years, combining the key service deliverables and change projects necessary to deliver the prioritised key areas of focus linked more closely to the outcomes described in the performance framework. In a climate where resources are constrained, prioritisation will be key, and the single integrated delivery programme will need to align closely with the affordability of the MTFS and capital strategy/programme. We are proposing a key change by creating a single delivery programme with no distinction between major change programmes and core service delivery. This should help mainstream and embed continuous improvement and effective change management. It should also align the whole organisation behind a simple, clear and prioritised programme of work, and improve our impact and performance. Work on the delivery programme is progressing and will be finalised for Cabinet approval following approval by full Council of the Council Plan.

**Key Business Frameworks** – As part of our integrated approach we are reviewing all our key business frameworks to ensure they support delivery of our Council Plan. This review includes frameworks such as risk management, performance and business planning, change, consultation & engagement and the strategy framework. These are at different places in their development and will continue to be progressed consistently and as part of an integrated suite.

**Performance Management Framework** - Members have been engaged, through a cross-party working group, in the development of a refreshed Performance Management Framework. The new framework will include three interconnected levels of measures that together will help assess the delivery of the Council Plan, whether our performance is improving in areas relevant to the Plan and give assurance on future trajectories. The development of the Performance Management Framework is progressing to agreed timescales and all Services are engaging with the piece of work to ensure the PMF fully supports the Council Plan.

**Strategic Risk Management Framework** – The Framework was approved by Cabinet in April 2021 and articulates the Council's risk appetite across a range of risk areas. It also offers a consistent and integrated approach to identifying and assessing risks associated with delivering the Council's priorities.

**Community Engagement** – We will be enhancing the opportunities we have to capture feedback and ideas from our stakeholders. For example, a new

residents' panel, called the Voice of Warwickshire, is being trialled. This will involve a representative group of up to 1,000 residents from across the county who will be invited to participate in engagement activities on a range of policy issues. In addition, we are enabling the opportunity for more interactive, discussion-based engagement through an improved Ask Warwickshire platform. We will also continue to use existing engagement opportunities to talk to specific groups such as the Youth Council and our work with the voluntary sector. Together, these mechanisms will provide a robust, blended approach to engagement where we can use the right tools at the right times with the right audiences. All these developments will be described and supported through a new Consultation & Engagement Framework.

**Staff engagement** - The public engagement exercise has been shared with staff internally through briefings and internal publications. Further engagement with staff forums on the emerging Areas of Focus is planned for early in the new year on the detailed shape of the Council Plan and Delivery Plan.

**Trade Union Engagement** – Development of the Council Plan and the MTFS has been a standing agenda item on the regular meetings we have with Trade Union representatives over recent months. This dialogue and engagement will continue up to the point that the Council Plan and MTFS are approved by Council in February. Thereafter engagement will continue but will revert to more standard items of business.

- 4.2 This is a new and enhanced approach by the Council to integrated planning and it is anticipated that it will develop, iterate, and mature over several cycles. The work we are doing this year sets a strong foundation and direction for work in future planning cycles.

## **5. Financial Implications**

- 5.1 The financial implications of the Council Plan will be addressed by the Medium-Term Financial Strategy, emphasising the importance of an integrated approach. Our ongoing work to support the preparation of the 2022-23 budget and MTFS refresh will continue to emphasise the link between available resources, priorities and pressures on both supply and demand.

## **6. Environmental Implications**

- 6.1 The Environmental Implications of the emerging Council Plan are a key consideration and are reflected in the revision of the Council's strategic priorities to include 'Sustainable futures. This will translate through the Areas of Focus and the supporting Delivery Plan.





The report was circulated to the following members prior to publication:

Local Member(s):

Other members: