

CABINET

Budget and Policy Framework Update 2014/15 – Review of the Corporate Plan – Council Ethos 21 January 2014

Report of the Chief Executive

PURPOSE OF REPORT			
To commence Council's commitment to a full review of Lancaster City Council's Corporate Plan 2014/15 and 2015/16			
Key Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	Non-Key Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Officer Referral	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Date of notice of forthcoming key decision		18 December 2013	
This report is public			

RECOMMENDATION OF COUNCILLOR EILEEN BLAMIRE

- (1) That Cabinet considers the ethos that should underpin the development of the Corporate Plan.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report is the first in terms of a review of the Corporate Plan for 2014/15 and 2015/16. The Corporate Plan and Budget need to be taken together and, at this stage, it is impossible to accurately forecast the budget position beyond 2015/16, although all commentators are predicting a decade or more of austerity.
- 1.2 Unprecedented funding reductions, coupled with demographic and environmental pressures, call for a fundamental rethink of what the future role of local government should be and how effective services can be provided into the next decade.
- 1.3 This first report takes the Council's commitment to a full review of the Corporate Plan and considers what should be the Council's underpinning ethos for its Corporate Plan for the next two years and beyond.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Council, at its meeting on the 13 May 2013, acknowledged that the financial situation set out in the Medium Term Financial Strategy required a full review of the Corporate Plan for 2014/15 and beyond (Minute No. 20).
- 2.2 Council, at its meeting on the 17 July 2013, agreed a Vision for 2013/14

(Minute No 48)

“The Council’s Vision

A sustainable self-contained and varied group of communities comprising:

MORECAMBE AND HEYSHAM – a confident community with a regenerated living, working and leisure environment;

LANCASTER – a prosperous historic city with a thriving knowledge economy

CARNFORTH – a successful market town and service centre for North Lancashire and South Cumbria; and

A conserved, enhanced and diversified COAST AND COUNTRYSIDE with a network of vibrant rural communities; which will lead the North West in its quality of life and environmental and design standard and within which sustainable housing, economic and retail development to meet local needs will be supported.”

- 2.3 Cabinet, at its meeting on the 03 December 2013 (Minute No 66), resolved amongst other things:

“That in terms of corporate planning, Cabinet considers retaining the existing four priorities in some form but that the outcomes be redefined and the actions be reduced as the budget process develops, to:

- give a narrower focus, and to*
- reflect that the Council’s contribution to each will be significantly affected by reductions in Government funding.”*

3.0 Ethos

- 3.1 The unprecedented changes facing Lancaster City Council provide a requirement to reconsider the ethos of the Council that underpins its prioritisation and approaches to governance and service delivery. Local government generally has been considering different approaches. Perhaps the most commonly described is the ‘enabling model’ which has prevailed in local government during the past decade, fostering a largely unchallenged assumption that becoming a commissioner rather than a provider of services makes ‘commonsense’; but practitioners and commentators are beginning to question the assumption that this is the best way to meet the demands of complex policy and practical issues. In any case, the route taken by this council over that decade has primarily been one of retaining direct service provision within local government rather than to adopt this commissioner model.
- 3.2 Alternatives to the enabling council model have emerged in the last few years, including the ‘co-operative’ and ‘easy’ council; but such models are often aligned with an ideology where authorities divest themselves of capacity to deliver directly. They may also fail to marry proactive community leadership with the ability to ensure the needs of those communities are being met in a cohesive way.
- 3.3 It is against this backdrop of emerging alternative models that the Association

for Public Service Excellence (APSE) has developed the Ensuring Council as a logical alternative to existing models and it is this model that most closely represents the approach of Lancaster City Council. The principles of the Ensuring Council have been honed and tested out through the APSE 2020 Commission consultation with council elected members and officers and experts from local government bodies.

3.4 The ensuring ethos can be described as

Stewardship – ensuring the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the local area, which is the principal role of the ensuring council.

Core capacity – maintaining the strategic advantages of in-house services to meet local needs.

Municipal entrepreneurialism – capturing opportunities for collaborative innovation and income generation.

Collaboration – working with a range of service providers on a collaborative basis rather than through competition.

Politics – grounding local decision making in political accountability.

Social justice – ensuring the values of local government are founded on equality and meeting community needs.

3.5 What is an Ensuring Council?

- (i) The Ensuring Council recognises the responsibility of local authorities to be active stewards of their communities.
- (ii) It foregrounds the democratic legitimacy of local authorities, placing politics and public value before reliance on competitive markets.
- (iii) It endorses collaboration with citizens and stakeholders rather than competition and contractual relations.
- (iv) It acknowledges the responsibilities of local government for advancing social justice through its strategic mobilisation of public employment and civic entrepreneurship.
- (v) The Ensuring Council model as well as being consistent with the approach of the council over the last few years would also be consistent with the revised Vision agreed by council in July 2013 and the retention of the council's existing priorities albeit in a redefined and narrower form.

4.0 **Options**

4.1 Option 1 – Cabinet to consider the Ensuring Council model as the ethos of the council that would underpin the development of the Corporate Plan to be proposed to Council

4.2 Option 2 – To retain the present ethos as described in the current Corporate Plan purpose and Values.

4.3 Option 3 - To adopt a different ethos

5.0 Officer Preferred Option (and comments)

5.1 Whilst there is not a preferred officer option, the advantage of using an accepted model as the ethos for underpinning the Corporate Plan is that this would provide a clear steer for the development of the plan and provide accepted definitions of the ethos used which would be helpful both in terms of communication and the sharing best practice.

RELATIONSHIP TO POLICY FRAMEWORK

The Corporate Plan is a central part of the policy framework stating the key priorities and actions that are necessary to deliver the priorities and the outcomes that the council aims to achieve for our district.

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT

(including Health & Safety, Equality & Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, HR, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)

None directly arising as a result of this report.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None directly arising at this stage, although alongside this a separate update report on the budget is provided for consideration.

OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Human Resources:

None directly arising as a result of this report.

Information Services:

None directly arising as a result of this report.

Property:

None directly arising as a result of this report

Open Spaces:

None directly arising as a result of this report.

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The S151 Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

APSE publication – The Ensuring Council –
An alternative vision for the future of local
government – available via APSE website:

<http://www.apse.org.uk/apse/index.cfm/research/current-research-programme/the-ensuring-council-an-alternative-vision-for-the-future-of-local-government/the-ensuring-council-an-alternative-vision-for-the-future-of-local-government/>

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