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| <b>Title of Report:</b>            | <b>West Berkshire Council Strategy 2015/19<br/>Consultation Feedback Report</b> |
| <b>Report to be considered by:</b> | Council on 19 May 2015  |
| <b>Forward Plan Ref:</b>           | C2838b  |

**Purpose of Report:**

To inform Members of the feedback received from the consultation on the Draft Council Strategy 2015/16

**Recommended Action:**

- (1) To note the feedback received to the proposed Council Strategy.
- (2) In response to the feedback received:
  - (2.1) To refer all of the comments in relation to the east of the district to the Eastern Area Vision Task Group for them to consider when formulating their new vision.
  - (2.2) To develop a "Delivery Plan" to support the Council Strategy 2015-2019.
  - (2.3) To approve a number of textual changes offering more clarity and format changes
- (3) That Council, at its annual meeting, be requested to adopt the West Berkshire Council Strategy for 2015 - 2019 as amended following consultation.

**Reason for decision to be taken:**

The Council Strategy forms part of the Council's approved Policy Framework

**Other options considered:**

None

**Key background documentation:**

West Berkshire Draft Council Strategy 2015 - 2019  
Consultation feedback received

**Published Works:**

None

The proposals contained in this report will help to achieve the following Council Strategy priorities:

- CSP1 – Caring for and protecting the vulnerable**
- CSP2 – Promoting a vibrant district**
- CSP3 – Improving education**
- CSP4 – Protecting the environment**

The proposals will also help achieve the following Council Strategy principles:

- CSP5 - Putting people first**
- CSP6 - Living within our means**
- CSP7 - Empowering people and communities**
- CSP8 - Doing what's important well**

The proposals contained in this report will help to achieve the above Council Strategy priorities and principles by:  
ensuring that the feedback from the consultation is given due consideration

| 2014/15 Portfolio Member Details            |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Name &amp; Telephone No.:</b>            | Councillor Roger Croft - Tel 07765 224249 |
| <b>E-mail Address:</b>                      | rcroft@westberks.gov.uk                   |
| <b>Date Portfolio Member agreed report:</b> | 23 April 2015                             |

| Contact Officer Details |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| <b>Name:</b>            | Catalin Bogos                                  |
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### Implications

|                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| <b>Policy:</b>            | The Council Strategy is part of the Council's approved Policy Framework                 |
| <b>Financial:</b>         | The MTFs approved by Council in March of this year reflects the draft Council Strategy. |
| <b>Personnel:</b>         | None  |
| <b>Legal/Procurement:</b> | None  |
| <b>Property:</b>          | None  |
| <b>Risk Management:</b>   | None  |

| Is this item relevant to equality?   | Please tick relevant boxes |                                     |
|--|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
|  | Yes                        | No                                  |
| Does the policy affect service users, employees or the wider community and:  |                            |                                     |
| • Is it likely to affect people with particular protected characteristics differently?   | <input type="checkbox"/>   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| • Is it a major policy, significantly affecting how functions are delivered?   | <input type="checkbox"/>   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| • Will the policy have a significant impact on how other organisations operate in terms of equality?   | <input type="checkbox"/>   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| • Does the policy relate to functions that engagement has identified as being important to people with particular protected characteristics? | <input type="checkbox"/>   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| • Does the policy relate to an area with known inequalities?   | <input type="checkbox"/>   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| <b>Outcome</b> (Where one or more 'Yes' boxes are ticked, the item is relevant to equality)  |                            |                                     |
| Relevant to equality - Complete an EIA available at <a href="http://intranet/EqIA">http://intranet/EqIA</a>                                  |                            | <input type="checkbox"/>            |
| Not relevant to equality   |                            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

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|---|-------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Is this item subject to call-in?</b>   | Yes: <input type="checkbox"/>       | No: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| If not subject to call-in please put a cross in the appropriate box:  |                                     |   |
| The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |   |
| Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council  | <input type="checkbox"/>            |   |
| Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position  | <input type="checkbox"/>            |   |
| Considered or reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Management Commission or associated Task Groups within preceding six months | <input type="checkbox"/>            |   |
| Item is Urgent Key Decision   | <input type="checkbox"/>            |   |
| Report is to note only  | <input type="checkbox"/>            |   |

# Executive Summary and Report

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Council Strategy 2015-2019 sets out what the Council aims to achieve as priority areas for improvement over the next four years and to highlight how we intend to achieve it.
- 1.2 The previous Council Strategy expired on 31 March 2015.
- 1.3 Comments were invited on the draft Council Strategy 2015-19 between 2nd February and 16th March 2015. Comments were able to be submitted by the public or organisations via an online survey or through paper copies. The consultation was published on the Council's website, Twitter feed, Facebook page and media releases were sent to the local media. Key target groups, organisations and stakeholders were also contacted directly by email and encouraged to comment.

## 2. Proposals

- 2.1 This paper summarises the responses received from the consultation activity and actions to be taken based on this feedback. Individual proposals are being recommended as part of each section within the report.

## 3. Context

- 3.1 A total of 118 responses were received in response to the consultation exercise. These can be summarised as follows:
  - (i) 96 (81.4%) from individual members of the public;
  - (ii) 2 (1.7%) from Elected Members who responded in personal capacity,
  - (iii) 5 (4.2%) from Town and Parish Councils.
  - (iv) The remaining responses were from the Political Party, Love Tilehurst, Save Tilehurst, Friends of the Earth, West Berkshire Council Team, Newbury College, Unison, Senior citizens, Small Businesses, Safer Communities Partnership and BBOWT (Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust).
- 3.2 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 sets out the public sector equality duty which, in the exercise of its functions, includes the requirement to have due regard to eliminate discrimination, to advance equal opportunity and foster good relations. As a result it was decided to offer an opportunity for respondents to provide information on their equalities characteristics.
- 3.3 The majority of respondents were aged 35 and over and were from white ethnic background. Of the total respondents: less females responded to the consultation, only 4% of total respondents consider themselves to have a disability and 4% were the primary carer for an elderly or disabled person. Almost half of respondents answered that Christianity was their religion. Two responses received were from people reporting their sexual orientation as Bisexual, Gay/Lesbian.

#### **4. Themes resulting from the qualitative analysis of the responses to the consultation**

4.1 A number of distinct themes have resulted from the qualitative analysis of the 118 responses received as part of the consultation activity and are listed below starting with the one that included the highest number of comments/responses.

#### **5. Theme 1: Relevance of the vision, aims and priorities for the Eastern area of West Berkshire (primarily Tilehurst but also Calcot and Purley)**

5.1 40 of 118 respondents fed back that they did not see how they would benefit directly from the new Council Strategy. They considered that the scarce resources seemed to be primarily focused on Newbury and Thatcham to the detriment of the East of the District. They also considered that proposed new housing in their green areas would negatively impact on quality of life of the residents living there and that not enough investment was made in infrastructure (roads) and facilities (GPs, Hospitals, libraries, leisure etc.).

#### **6. Theme 2: Positive feedback on the proposed vision, aims and priorities**

6.1 16 of the 118 responses fully support the draft Council Strategy and its vision, aims and objectives. Comments included: 'A great overall strategic Vision to have and to aim towards', 'The vision is fine', 'Agree with the vision and can clearly see how the Partnership can contribute', 'It looks well thought out, easy to read and presented in a good manner'.

#### **7. Theme 3: Agree/Good, but...**

7.1 9 of the 118 responses supported the vision, aims and priorities but added supplementary comments some of which are set out below.

7.2 Some of the responses suggested more focus on the practical plans and for the statements included in the strategy to be more specific and measurable. Others commented that the vision should be more ambitious and 'to have more teeth'. It is intended to develop a "Delivery Plan" to support the Council Strategy and these comments will be addressed as part of this on-going work.

7.3 Some of those responding questioned if the proposed aims were achievable given the limited level of resources available. Other responses suggested more partnership working between organisations would be beneficial particularly when those organisations were located in the same geographical area.

#### **8. Theme 4: A lack of focus on the Environment**

8.1 A number of respondents (8 of 118) highlighted that the environment was no longer included as part of the Council Strategy. The comments argue that:

- (1) Climate change was a more important issue and should be prioritised;
- (2) Actions to reduce CO2 emissions, fuel poverty, air pollution, should continue to promote sympathetic renewable energy developments and focus on energy and carbon efficiencies;

- (3) Investment in the environment supported healthier lifestyles, contract with BBOWT did not 'tick the box' with regard to environment responsibilities;
- (4) Actions should include improving the insulation of buildings; incentives to use electric vehicles, public transport, bicycles and walking; encouragement to buy locally-sourced food; measurement of existing CO2 emissions for benchmark purposes; education and incentives for individuals to change their behaviour; encouragement for local energy generation;
- (5) A detailed response was provided suggesting that not including the protection and enhancing natural environment was not compliant with statutory obligations, national or local planning policy. Without this the other aims and priorities would not be effectively met.

8.2 The item relating to the electrification to Bedwyn needed rewording as "We will have secured rail electrification to Bedwyn as early as possible within Network Rail's future programme."

## **9. Theme 5: Items not included in the strategy**

9.1 A number of respondents proposed that other items should be included in the strategy for example:

- (1) cycling and investment in cycling infrastructure;
- (2) the economy and diversification of rural economy, opportunity to use underutilised rural assets; job creation, attracting businesses into the area and promote locally owned and run businesses;
- (3) the Education section of the strategy had no mention of Early Years (Children Centres and providers);
- (4) health not being given enough focus;
- (5) Neighbourhood Plans - the Council continue to promote 'community plans' but there is no mention of the more influential 'neighbourhood plans';
- (6) no provision for youth; After school sporting activities.

9.2 As part of responding to this feedback (themes 4 and 5) it is proposed that the foreword clarifies that the draft Council Strategy 2015-2019 is not intended to cover all of the services that the Council delivers. The Strategy needs to reflect the fact that the Council is required to deliver hundreds of core/essential services including protecting the environment, waste, trading standards, environmental health, licensing, elections, land charges, countryside and improving public health. The purpose of this strategy is not to detail all of them but to focus on areas where the Council need and want to improve. The broader range of services provided by the Council are included in other strategic or operational plans such as the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

## **10. Formatting and wording suggestions**

- 10.1 A number of suggestions have been received on the format of the strategy and wording and, where appropriate some changes have been made to make them more clear. Appendix 1 incorporates all these suggested amendments.

## **11. Equalities Impact Assessment Outcomes**

- 11.1 This paper reports on the feedback received to a consultation activity. Respondents have been offered the opportunity to provide information on their equalities characteristics.

## **12. Conclusion**

A good level of response was received to the consultation on the Draft Council Strategy 2015-2019 from individuals and on behalf of organisations. A high level summary of these comments has been provided within this report.

Based on the analysis of the feedback received no substantial changes are suggested and more clarity is included to highlight the fact that the strategy details the priorities for further improvement.

## **Appendices**

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Appendix 1 Amended Council Strategy following consultation

## **Consultees**

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The report and the amended Council Strategy have been produced as a result of a wide consultation exercise as detailed in Sections 1 and 3 of this report.