

Executive – 3 January 2008

## REVIEW OF CORPORATE PRIORITIES

### Report of Strategic Director (Community)

**Statutory Powers:** Various

**Financial Implications:** None directly arising from this report, however once the Council agrees the corporate priorities it will be necessary to realign budgets to these priorities.

#### Purpose

To report the outcome of the Member workshop held on 23 November 2007 arranged to informally review corporate priorities, and having considered the outcome, for the Executive to consider a way forward.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**That the Executive RESOLVES to receive the outcome of the informal Member workshop and considers the way forward.**

### Background

1. The Council first developed 6 ranked priorities in 2002. The priorities established are as follows;

**CP1 - Affordable homes:** Securing a supply of housing for local people at affordable levels.

**CP2 - Good jobs:** Creating the conditions for the growth and maintenance of quality economic activity.

**CP3 - Retain the district's character:** Maintaining the district's distinctive environment whilst enabling access and sensitive development.

**CP4 - A clean district:** Maintaining a clean environment.

**CP5 - An accessible council:** Working with others to improve access to key services.

**CP6 - Value for money:** Improving core service performance in a cost-effective way.

2. In 2005 the priorities were reviewed and three cross cutting themes underpinning the 6 priorities were agreed, namely Climate Change, Meeting the Needs of Young People, and promoting a Healthier Community.

### Issues to consider in a review of priorities

3. It is important that priorities are regularly reviewed to ensure that they remain in line with community needs, government policy and resource availability, and that they take account of the respective roles and priorities of different tiers of local government and other agencies.
4. In recent years community needs have been expressed through a range of public feedback, including consultation underpinning the development of the Sustainable Community Strategy, Sounding Board and General Satisfaction consultation surveys, community planning events, and budget consultations. Appendix 1 summarises the outcomes of the various consultation exercises.
5. Recent government policy has required Council's to focus on 'place shaping'; sustainability; inclusion, cohesion and equality; and value for money/efficient use of resources. New pressures are likely to emerge from legislation highlighted in the recent Queen's speech.

6. The resources available to the Council have significant implications for priority setting. Members will be aware of the budget pressures as set out in the report to the Executive on 6<sup>th</sup> December, which include the financial impact of new legislative requirements (e.g. concessionary fares), efficiency targets, the relatively low priority of District Council services in the Government's formula grant decisions, the loss or reduction of various external funding opportunities, and the constraint that a 1% increase in Council Tax only generates £46,000 to respond to new demands.
7. Taking account of these pressures, the Council needs to assess whether it can afford to retain 6 priorities and 3 cross cutting themes. New ways of working may provide a different way of achieving some of the Council's priorities. Depending on which corporate priorities are finally agreed, core activities of the District Council could be delivered by the Council either on its own or in partnership with adjoining local authorities, while more general community needs could be delivered through the Devon Strategic Partnership and the Local Area Agreement. The Devon Strategic Partnership priorities, which have recently been agreed, are attached as Appendix 2.
8. When reviewing priorities it is important to bear in mind that a major change in current direction may require organisational change, and time for existing funding commitments to expire. It is also important to acknowledge that, notwithstanding the identification of corporate priorities, there are a wide range of statutory services that the Council must continue to provide.

### **Outcome from the workshop**

9. An informal Member workshop was held on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2007. The structure of the event was for Members to identify the possible future priorities for the Council in the morning, and in the afternoon to identify key areas of action which Members might wish to pursue under the suggested priorities. The outcome of the workshop was a view that the Council should focus on the following themes in priority order;
  - a) Affordable housing
  - b) Employment facilitation, economic development, good jobs and prosperity
  - c) Youth issues and children and young peoples needs.

Other themes considered important included waste management, and achieving a clean/protected environment and retaining the area's distinct character.

10. Themes identified that the Council could seek to promote through the Local Area Agreement included;
  - a) Transport and traffic (public/infrastructure and management)
  - b) Youth issues/needs
  - c) Young people and the elderly

Other themes considered important included climate change and skills/training.

11. Priority actions identified under the key themes that the Council could focus on included;
  - a) Affordable housing
    - Bringing forward land through the planning process and enabling affordable housing development particularly on exception sites.
  - b) Economy/jobs
    - Providing sites and premises and facilitating employment development.

- c) Youth issues
  - Youth housing, more effective youth engagement and youth jobs.

12. Priority actions identified under the key themes for possible promotion through the Local Area Agreement included;

- a) Transportation issues
  - i) Rural transport and improving access to services
  - ii) Infrastructure improvements to resolve existing congestion and reduce the impact of new development.
- b) Youth issues
  - i) Promote job opportunities
  - ii) Improve play/sport facilities
  - iii) Subsidise public transport provision
  - iv) Improve skills
  - v) Youth advice
- c) Young People and Elderly
  - i) Improve support to enable independent living
  - ii) Improve health facilities
  - iii) Support concessionary fares
  - iv) Support for the third (i.e. voluntary) sector to support young people and the elderly

13. A summary of the outcome from the workshop is attached as Appendix 3.

14. Members will note that the priorities identified within the workshop include an element of duplication, and require further work to clarify what specific actions need to be taken under each priority, the value for money implications of such action, and the consequences on the community of deleting some of the existing priorities, and actions.

### Next steps

15. The workshop has provided the basis for Members to formally review the Council's priorities. The Executive will wish to determine how it wants to progress these issues for subsequent consideration by the Council. The Council's future decision will influence budget considerations in 2009/10, as there will be a need to ensure that there is an alignment between the Council's priorities and the use of resources, as well as future Local Area Agreement discussions.

### Risk Assessment

16. The following are the significant risks and opportunities identified:

Opportunity	Issues / Obstacles	Benefits
Regularly reviewed priorities which reflect resource availability, community needs, and government priorities ensures that the Council is effectively using its resources and providing value for money.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Community aspirations exceed the levels of resourcing available.</li> <li>- The opportunity to redirect resources to new priorities is reduced as the Council's efficiency and subsequent saving in the delivery of core statutory services is increased leaving less flexibility for funding and staff re-allocations.</li> </ul>	Targeted priorities enables the Council to better meet it's overall vision of improving well being.

## **Conclusion**

17. This report provides a summary of the workshop, and enables the Executive to reflect on the outcomes and consider a way forward.

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Executive  
3 January 2008

## **Background Documents:**

None