

REPORT OF **The Leader and Chief Executive**

To: **Full Council**

Subject: **Torridge Strategic Plan**

Date: **31st July 2023**

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To present the proposed timetable for the development and approval of the Strategic Plan.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Council's Strategic Plan sets out the vision and ambitions TDC aspire to achieve over the coming years. Whilst it highlights a start date of 2023 much of where we want to be goes far beyond that period and this plan aims to set TDC on the path to deliver a long term vision.

2. REPORT

Background

Following the District Council Elections in May 2023 all Councillors have been invited to attend and participate in a wide variety of induction, training, and themed workshop sessions. During that period Councillors have been allocated Committee seats, Chair and Vice-Chair positions. The next stage for the Council is for Councillors to develop their vision for TDC and incorporate that into a Strategic Plan for the Council.

The Plan provides the direction of travel for the Council and is broken down into a series of themes and below them sit a range of action(s) and action plans, which our Chief Executive, Management Team and officers are responsible for delivering. These actions form the basis of each of the Councils' Services Business Plans developed by the Operational Managers of each service with the Lead Members being the Councillor point of contact for each. Progress against the actions is reported to Internal Overview & Scrutiny Committee (Quarterly Business Review), with Leadership and Property & Major Projects Working Group providing governance and political steer on significant areas of work and projects, although any decisions required will be reported to Community & Resources.

Indicative Timetable

The Strategic Plan should be regarded as one of, if not the most important direction shaping document Councillors will be involved in developing for their term of office and beyond. The timetable has therefore been developed to progress this critical piece of work in order that it can be adopted by Full Council before the end of the 2023 calendar year.

Event	Date	Purpose
Full Council	Monday 31 st July 2023	To introduce and launch the development of the 2023 Strategic Plan
All Councillor Workshop	Monday 14 th August 2023 – Please note all day session	Councillors to share their aspirations, debate and prioritise themes and high-level actions to include in a “draft Strategic Plan”
Full Council	September / October – date to be confirmed	Draft Strategic Plan for approval to go out for consultation
Consultation Period	To be run for six weeks ending before 24 th November 2023	Consult with Town and Parish Council’s, businesses and residents of TDC and all interested stakeholders
Full Council	11 th December 2023	To receive and report consultation comments and approve final Strategic Plan
Service Business Plans	From 11 th December 2023 to 31 st March 2024	To incorporate Strategic Plan into business plan documents.
Internal Overview & Scrutiny	2024/25 Committee schedule not yet set	To report progress on first quarter activity through quarterly business report (QBR)

The 2020 “previous” Vision

Is centred around 4 themes:

- Local Economy
- Communities, Health and Housing
- Our Environment Our Future
- Our Council

Behind each of these themes are actions that the Council are setting our sights on achieving. A copy of the previous Strategic Plan is attached as appendix 1.

Significant Areas for Consideration when developing the Strategic Plan

Current work programme

The existing plan still has a number of longer-term projects either still in development phase(s), and or in progress / implementation and will need to be included in the new Plan. The significant projects already being worked on are valued at c.£28.9m:

- Environment Centre - £7.3m

- Appledore Clean Maritime Innovation Centre – £17.3m project, which includes Levelling up funding of £15.6m.
- Development and Implementation of housing sites and homelessness accommodation (subject to approval by Full Council 31 July 2023) - £2.3m
- Government Funding - £2m delivery of Rural England and Shared Prosperity Funds
- Joint Local Plan – Review of “scope and nature of still to be finalised”

Opportunities for consideration

- **Floating Off Shore Wind (FLOW)** – whilst longer term outcome Councillors still need to consider whether and to what extent TDC should invest in and embrace what might be possible for the area.
- **XLinks** – whilst a private sector developed project should TDC being embracing and looking to seek opportunities that could permeate from?
- **Devolution** – Devon, Plymouth and Torbay County Deal is still progressing, which includes a range of potential opportunities that Members will need to consider how and whether to embrace.

Levelling up Partnership

Torrige District Council has been identified as one of twenty Local Authority Areas across England to be invited to form a Levelling up Partnership (LUP) with Government. The details and formation of the LUP is still emerging with discussions between TDC & DLUHC Officers continuing in advance of any decisions required by the Council.

However, what we do know is that £400m has been allocated by Government to the policy area albeit no allocations or indicative allocations have been made to Councils yet.

TDC has been identified as a LUP area based on a range of 4 key metrics indicating that would benefit from levelling up, which are:

- Percentage of adults with Level 3+ qualifications
- Gross Value Added (GVA) per hour worked
- Median gross weekly pay
- Healthy life expectancy

A LUP “is about bringing together all the levers of Government” therefore not constrained to the Government Department (DLUHC) with responsibility for Local Government as it clearly understood that levelling up areas more often needs support across Government. This should therefore be seen as a unique opportunity for Torrige to work with Government as a real gamechanger for making significant improvements in the future prospects for our residents and businesses.

TDC officers working closely with officials at DLUHC and supported by Devon County Council officers have already commenced the exploratory and preparatory work needed to gather data and evidence required to form the basis for determining how the partnership is likely to form and what interventions, support, and or projects might be considered appropriate to the levelling up of Torridge.

The opportunities could and can be broad covering the breadth of the 12 Levelling Up Missions and therefore provides TDC chance to consider the strategic priorities that could be put forward for support through the LUP.

It is timely that Councillors are commencing the development of the TDC Strategic Plan and therefore are able to incorporate this opportunity into this critical workstream and also consider how the wider opportunities highlighted in the report above might be embraced and developed further to level up Torridge.

Threats and or Barriers

- **Local Government Finance / Funding** - whilst TDC has developed and balanced its Medium Term Financial Strategy (**MTFS**) it is currently still reliant to a degree on utilising one-off reserve balances to close the gap in future years. Single year finance settlements and pay deals do little to help with the longer-term planning required for major projects and the Member Budget Working Group will need to form again to work through and consider options for the Council's budgetary position. The MTFS underpins and is the financial support to the Council's Strategy Plan.

Duration of the Strategic Plan

Historically the Council's Strategic Plan has fitted in with the term of the Council i.e. 4 years. However, recently it has become far more evident that many of the plans and projects the Council is involved with span a longer period. Therefore, it is proposed that this Strategic Plan will be for the period 2023 to 2028 and will be updated on a rolling basis with a year removed and later year added as each year passes. This can be achieved with an interim review each year with the expectation of a fuller review after each District Council election. This approach provides assurance that the Council is committed to longer term goals and aspirations whilst also providing a degree of continuity.

3. Implications

Legal Implications

There are no specific legal implications.

Financial Implications

There are no specific financial implications.

Human Resource Implications

There are no specific substantiality implications

Equality / Diversity

There are no specific equality / Diversity issues

Risk Management

There are no specific risk issues contained in the report.

Compliance with Policies and Strategies

The report aims to set the Council's strategic vision for the next three years

Leader View

Not applicable as this is a joint report of the Council Leader Councillor James and the Chief Executive.

4. CONCLUSIONS

That the Strategic Plan 2023 process is launched and all Councillors and encouraged to get involved in this critical and key document, which sets the direction for the Council through its current term and beyond.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Note the report, timetable and opportunities for Torridge.
- Approve the timeframe and rolling nature of the Strategic Plan to a five-year rolling basis.