

# Agenda Item

**Executive Board**

**26 September 2007**

**DL**



## Visioning - final report and recommendations

### Summary

This report pulls together the corporate priorities identified by the Vision Panel following an extensive period of consultation with the public, our partners and officers. It also gives alternatives for a vision, values and strapline for members of the Executive Board to debate. The draft new Corporate Strategy is also attached and is a key corporate document which will pave the way for the Council to set out its ambitions and priorities for the next four years and align capacity and manage performance so that its aspirations are achieved effectively and on time.

### Recommendation

1. **The Executive agrees a vision, values and strapline.**
2. **The Executive agrees the Corporate Strategy priorities and format, and delegates to the Corporate Director – Central Services, in liaison with the Portfolio Holder Resources, the task of completing the content.**

#### a) **Reasons for Recommendation**

At this stage in the Visioning process, the Council needs to make firm decisions about the future direction of the Council.

#### b) **Alternative Options**

None

#### c) **Risk Considerations**

The ambitions and priorities may be difficult to fund in what is likely to be a stringent government Comprehensive Spending Review affecting the next three years of funding from central government. This and other financial implications are outlined in the Council's Financial Strategy (2008 onwards) which highlights a significant gap in resources available to the Council in meeting its existing Plans. However, the Panel has debated and clearly identified the priorities both for the District as a whole, and in terms of service specific enhancements, so officers will be clear about where to target resources.

#### d) **Policy and Budgetary Considerations**

This report considers the Council's proposed overarching strategic document for the next 4 years. The Financial Strategy is already aligned to some extent, and the Head of Finance has included his comments in the Financial Implications section of this report.

#### e) **Date for Review of Decision**

The Corporate Strategy is reviewed every year, although not necessarily to the extent we have gone to this year.

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## 1 Main Body of the Report

1.1 At its 31 July meeting, the Vision Panel members reviewed all the evidence to date and took stock of the messages coming from key quarters:

- a) Audit Commission Annual Letter
- b) General User satisfaction survey
- c) Consultation locally on the key issues facing the Council
- d) Devon County's vision
- e) Proposed recycling pilot
- f) Place shaping agenda
- g) Heads of Service advice on future service developments and needs
- h) Proposed priorities for the Council

1.2 After lengthy debate, the Vision Panel agreed a steer to officers on both corporate priorities as well as specific service enhancements. Appendix 1 sets out the priorities and they are listed here with alternative wording for debate:

Affordable homes	or	Affordable housing
Good jobs	or	Our economy or Thriving economy
Safe, clean and green environment	or	Green environment or Special environment
Zero landfill	or	Recycling
Children and young people	or	Young people
Our customers	or	Excellent services
An inspirational Council	or	A great Council

This draft new Corporate Strategy is a key corporate document which will pave the way for the Council to set out its ambitions and priorities for the next four years and align capacity and manage performance so that its aspirations are achieved effectively and on time.

1.3 There is still the outstanding issue of a vision, values and strapline to agree. I sent a \*email asking for ideas and views from members and employees with a remit that they needed to be memorable and potentially include key words which Panel members linked with East Devon (quality, first class, Jurassic, heritage, coast, beautiful, green, great place to live, work and play). The strapline was the one that drew most comments and inspiration and suggestions fell into two broad categories. Group A are the ones that describe East Devon the place. Group B are the ones which try to capture what we as a Council are about.

### Group A

Gateway to the world heritage Jurassic coast  
Green fields, green ideals – we've got a lot to offer  
The natural District  
Quality spaces...healthy places...happy faces  
The cream of the West Country  
East Devon – town, country and coastal life worth sustaining  
East Devon – rhymes with heaven for a reason  
East Devon: ancient landscape – modern services  
East Devon - 100 thriving villages  
Distinctly different

### Group B

Working with you to make life better in East Devon

East Devon - quality of service for quality of life  
Small enough to care, big enough to count  
We care about what you care about

1.4 Members of the Vision Panel had a long debate about which is the most important message to capture - whether it is about East Devon the place or East Devon the Council. They discussed:

**Quality spaces...healthy places...happy faces** (although slightly cheesy, this sums up very well what East Devon is like and what EDDC is aiming to do. It's a lovely area, and we aim to keep it that way; it's a clean, crime free place to live and we aim to preserve that; people like living here and we want to look after the interests of all)

**The cream of the West Country** (makes a bold claim to be the best and suggests we are a District with ambition and big ideas)

**Gateway to the world heritage Jurassic coast** (incorporates our biggest claim to fame and lends itself to further marketing and branding)

**East Devon - 100 thriving villages** (gives a positive message about all our communities – its an inclusive way of describing our area)

**Working with you to make life better in East Devon** (combines people, communities, services and place which are all the things important to us)

There was no overall consensus about which one to recommend, in fact the suggestion for the Executive to consider is whether there should be a variety of strap lines we use for different occasions and areas of the District.

1.5 In terms of a vision, members of the Vision Panel liked:

- a. 'Outstanding and sustainable quality of life for everyone in East Devon'
- b. 'Passionate about quality of life for everyone'
- c. 'Working with you to make life better in East Devon'.
- d. 'An inspirational council that supports quality of life for all'.

1.6 In terms of our values, there was little disagreement with our existing ones, although several people commented they didn't understand 'gusto', and some ideas for new ones. I suggested various possibilities for debate at the Vision Panel, and from that discussion came these proposals:

**Courage:** to lead

**Wisdom:** to listen

**Passionate:** about people, performance and place

**Champions:** of challenge and innovation

1.7 The Joint Overview and Scrutiny Committee discuss the draft Corporate Strategy and Financial Strategy on 11 September 2007 and I will feed their views into the Executive Board meeting.

1.8 Finally, in developing our draft Corporate Strategy, I have taken into account two key national documents:

Appendix 2 - the Comprehensive Performance Assessment 'Ambition for the Community' section.

Appendix 3 - the Local Government Association proposal that all Councils adopt a nationally agreed Framework for Excellence (these themes are woven into our corporate priorities to make sure we keep our eye on the wider picture, whilst putting our efforts into those things which are important locally).

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## Legal Implications

The Corporate Strategy sets out a framework for delivering Council priorities. As the financial implications indicate, the Council will face some difficult decisions at the operational level as to which projects or services are funded in the 08/09 budget round. In making these decisions, members will need to be mindful of whether a service must be provided as a statutory duty, or whether it is a discretionary service. Even where there

is a statutory duty to provide a service, legislation does not usually prescribe the detail of how that service is to be provided, which gives members room to consider the level of provision the authority can afford.

## **Financial Implications**

The Council's Financial Strategy (2008 onwards) was adopted by the Executive Board on 1 August 2007 and will be aligned to the new Corporate Strategy. Included within the Financial Strategy is a five year Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) detailing assumptions and estimates involved in projecting the Council's finances forward. In common with other local authorities, East Devon will struggle to afford its spending plans with expenditure forecast to increase, due to pay and price inflation, at a faster rate than income. In addition, the Council can anticipate higher pension costs, additional demands to meet consumer expectations, legislative changes and more challenging performance targets.

The decision to pilot the roll out of a more comprehensive refuse/recycling service, including the weekly collection of kitchen waste, will have a profound impact on the revenue budget in the next and future financial years if the pilot leads to a District-wide approach.

The development of Cranbrook will also start to have an effect on services during the life of the 5 year financial plan. Against this, it is assumed low single figure increases in central government funding and the council tax, together with lower investment income, will not keep pace with the increased demands.

The position is explored in detail in the Medium Term Financial Plan contained in the Executive Board's 1 August agenda papers. As a headline, the Plan predicts an estimated shortfall on the General Fund budget in 2008/09 of £902,000, and this assumes an annual council tax rise of 4.99%. This gap then increases annually for the life of the Plan, to 2012/13.

The Financial Strategy outlines key principles underpinning the Strategy, which the Executive Board reaffirmed in its adoption of the Strategy:

- Annually a balanced budget set with expenditure limited to available resources
- General Fund balance to be maintained at or above advisory level.
- Resources will be redirected from low to high priority services to meet objectives set out in the Corporate Strategy.
- Council tax increases will be kept within annually announced Government guidelines.
- The Capital budget will follow the Capital Strategy in terms of scheme scoring and prioritisation.

Also the Financial Strategy sets out a way forward in addressing the gap in funding identified for both the General Fund and Capital Programme with particular consideration given to:

- Achieving efficiency savings to provide the current level of service at less cost, or an improved level of service at current cost.
- Ensuring services achieve value for money and continue to deliver the Council's priority aims and objectives.
- Alternative means of service delivery, including possible partnership arrangements.
- Options for acquiring assets and the use of Prudential Borrowing Code powers.
- To maximise income from fees and charges.
- The scrutiny of budget spending, including the requirement to appoint to vacant posts.
- The use of resources on an 'invest to save' basis.
- The phasing of projects over a different/longer time frame.

Work is already taking place in these areas to begin to address the funding gap and with the agreement of a new Corporate Strategy and the identification of clear priorities this will assist in where to target resources. The ambitions and priorities of the Council have been debated at a joint meeting of the Scrutiny and Corporate Overview Committees on 12 September 2007 along with the consideration on the Council's financial

position highlighted above. Members were given the opportunity to give an early steer to officers before the detailed 2008/09 budget preparation begins and before proposed service plans and budgets come to the Executive Board in January/February 2008 for debate. This same opportunity, along with the considerations of the recommendations and comments from the joint Overview and Scrutiny meeting, is now given to the Executive Board with this report.

### **Consultation on Reports to the Executive**

Detailed in the report

### **Background Papers**

- All Vision Panel meetings and supporting documents

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Denise Lyon  
Corporate Director – Central Services

Vision Panel  
6 September 2007