

Report of the Chief Executive

FUTURE COUNCIL 2020: FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE, A BETTER BARNLSLEY

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 To provide Members with an update on the progress of the Future Council Strategy and to outline the planned change, improvement and growth required to develop the organisation towards a sustainable Future Council, a brighter future and a better Barnsley.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 **That Members note this report and highlight any issues requiring future reports.**

3. Background

- 3.1 As we know, local authorities haven't always existed. Before they did, communities were left to look after themselves, coming together to take care of where they live and each other. Of course this also meant that the most vulnerable people were not supported in the way they needed. We also know that with the introduction of public services, huge progress has been made in the wellbeing of whole populations. And where opportunity doesn't flow to all equally, public services have developed to support those who need a little extra help, and to provide a safety net when necessary.

Local government in more recent years has developed in times of growth to benefit from increased public finances and so, over time, the range of services has increased. Whilst hugely beneficial, it has also brought about a paternalistic culture within local authorities and subsequently a learned helplessness within communities.

However, in 2016, the days are gone when we are able to step in to any need within the community – fulfilling a need for answers, services, advice and guidance, and even in some cases creating or fuelling that need.

- 3.2 Today we have five main drivers for that change, all significantly impacting on the role and function of our council:

- **Our drive for significantly improved service provision** will inevitably mean that we focus our attention on providing increasingly excellent services in those areas where we can add the most value. We must determine and develop our 'core offer' to be the best that it can be.

- **Austerity** means that our financial resources are severely limited made more challenging by the changing nature of local government finance, demographics and increased demand, particularly those with complex needs. This drives us to target our efforts to those areas where we can have the most impact.
- We know from our recent work through **Area Councils** and other community development activity that our communities have ability, capacity and resilience and want to get more involved in doing things for themselves, alongside our partner organisations.
- **Devolution** means taking back powers from central government and increasing our own control over our priorities and how we deliver them. Local devolution provides the opportunity to increase local empowerment. Localisation of business rates could be another potential opportunity to strengthen ourselves locally.
- We know that the recent vote in favour of **Brexit** will mean change, but it is not possible to be certain of exactly what that will mean for us yet – except that we can be sure it will bring both challenges and opportunities. We do know that we must start now to strengthen our key relationships across Europe (eg with employers within the region).

3.3 We know that all of this means that we need to continue to change what we do and how we do it. However, it's also clear that we will need to encourage culture change within our communities as well as within our council – and to continue to change the relationship we have with our communities and our partners.

3.4 Barnsley Council is already rising well to this challenge and so is ahead of the game. The work we have done to change ourselves and our organisation over the past four years has laid a strong foundation which will enable us to create a very different, truly modern local authority, as well as to respond positively to the drivers above (3.2).

4. **Where we are now, and how we got here**

4.1 Future Council was established as a concept in 2013 and this blueprint set out a fundamentally different approach to how we design, plan and deliver our services and achieve sustainability. Future Council has led to our delivery of:

- A new business model/organisation with the creation of business units supported by a strong, lean core
- Vision, values and behaviours which have been central to the change in the organisation's culture
- A changing relationship with our communities/greater empowerment and community involvement
- A revised approach to financial planning including the introduction of multiyear planning providing stability and certainty for the Council and its employees (e.g. 2015-2017 and 2017-2020)

- Clearly articulated outcomes enabling all colleagues to clearly see how their work contributes to the achievement of our corporate priorities
- A budget reduction totalling £87m over 2010-2017 whilst improving customer services and outcomes for residents

4.2 The Council's Strategic Risk Register (SRR) includes the following risk. This was a very real risk for us given the size of the change outlined in 4.1:

3027 - Failure to manage organisational change - 'Risk of Destabilisation of the Organisation

Over the past year our progress has ensured that this risk has become 'green' and now we are in a position to close it down.

We do, however, now have a new risk which is the failure to embed the changes to date, with the risk of 'Failure to achieve the full benefit of our change work to date and to ensure it is sustainable for the future'.

4.3 Despite the challenges we continue to be successful and receive recognition for our performance. In September 2015 we held our very first Tell Us What You Think Month, which was a four week focussed period of employee engagement. During the month we launched the Employee Survey and also completed the Investors in People (IIP) silver accreditation. We achieved the silver status which shows that our workforce and our people management and development is strong.

The Employee Survey was every employees opportunity to anonymously have their say and the results provided a number of positives, as well as some areas for improvement. 92% of employees said they were committed to making the Council successful and 72% of employees were proud to work for the Council. The main areas for improvement were the recognition that change had a negative impact on employees' workload and morale within teams.

We have continued to drive delivery against our corporate priorities and outcomes and have been externally recognised for our success.

Thriving and Vibrant Economy – we were ranked in the top 10 cities for private sector employment growth and our Enterprising Barnsley team won the prestigious 'Driving Growth' category at this year's Local Government Chronicle (LGC) awards.

People Achieving Their Potential – 88% of our early years and childcare settings are judged good or outstanding and Centre for Cities also ranked Barnsley second overall in relation to apprenticeships and our 77% completion rate for apprenticeships ranked the highest.

Strong and Resilient Communities – we have achieved the Carbon Trust Mark of Excellence and our joint waste management recycling facility partnership with Doncaster and Rotherham has recently won a national Best Energy from Waste Initiative award.

Our continued improvements and success culminated in being shortlisted for the LGC Council of the Year award and to show our appreciation for all of this success and the hard work and commitment of our workforce we provided all employees with an additional days leave.

5. What is next for us?

- 5.1 **Facilitating and accelerating growth:** If we are to achieve our ambition for economic growth and a more prosperous Barnsley, we will need to establish and grow the role of the Council in accelerating opportunity. This will require the scaling up of our effort, skills and activities – for example to provide or facilitate the provision of incentives for investment. This work will require a change in how we view and use our finances, as well as a further strengthening of our business and commercial acumen. Furthermore we will increasingly need to use our unique role to drive forward with new partnerships and integrated models with our public sector partners where it makes sense to do that. This will need to be locally with partners such as health agencies and regionally with our SCR partners maximising the opportunities arising from the devolution deal.
- 5.2 **Marshalling our resources to support early help offers and stepping in only when we have to do so, while being efficient and cost effective:** We have worked hard to support and develop capabilities and capacity within our communities and to shift our relationships from ‘paternal’ to ‘empowering’. If we are to maximise the benefits of these achievements then we will need to redesign our approach so that making use of our community assets is the *first* port of call for public services. And even in the small number of areas where that will never be possible (e.g. some of our child protection services), we could still join up our approaches more effectively and change the ways we work within our communities.
- 5.3 **Further developing our local devolution and Area Council model to drive additional innovation and improvement within our communities:** The work to support and develop capabilities and capacity within our communities has also been championed through the work of our Area Councils. There has been an increased will from all public services to work in a place based way and in doing so collectively they have achieved better outcomes. We now have the opportunity to build on the intelligence and experience we have gained through our commissioning so far, in order to focus more strongly on *first* using community assets and only awarding additional future investment to those activities which will deliver the biggest outcomes. This stronger emphasis on a focus on outcomes will require a commitment to different skills and ways of working for some of our elected members and we will need to support elements of that development through mandatory training.

- 5.4 **Supporting behaviour change within our communities:** Whilst we have worked hard to lead change and successfully build engagement within the council, we now need to pay attention to communication with our communities across Barnsley. In order to support the work outlined above it will be important for us to have clearly communicated the role of a modern local authority, as well as our core service offers (including our outcomes). It will also be crucial for us to focus our efforts on community engagement and culture change through social marketing. As well as a strong and active communications function, we will need to use our workforce development programmes to build the confidence and capability of all staff from across the council in this work.
- 5.5 **Dealing with the implications of Brexit:** Whilst we are not yet certain of what Brexit will mean for us, we can be sure it will bring both challenges and opportunities. In the meantime, we must focus on delivering our business as usual whilst at the same time as tightening our relationships across our European networks (including with employers already in our region). We will also remain mindful of the need for our communities to be safe, strong and united.
- 5.6 **Using technology to maximise our impact:** We have begun to see the benefits of channel shift as the number of our customers who access information or services in a digital way and at a time that best suits them, grows. We now need to look to further exploit the opportunities technology offers us, including ‘switching off’ channels that are no longer necessary or cost effective and making use of mobile technology which will allow more of us to work visibly within our communities – out and about and ‘on the ground’, rather than shut away in inaccessible buildings.
- 5.7 **Using our Improvement and Growth Fund to drive additional innovation and change within the Council:** Future Council has already changed the way we work, with colleagues from across the organisation sharing and developing their ideas for how we could work differently to achieve even more. In order to further stimulate and support innovation, managed risk taking and commercial and business thinking, a £3m Improvement and Growth Fund has been created to fund business cases which will clearly demonstrate alignment with our corporate priorities and evidence return on investment through cashable and/or non-cashable efficiencies.
- 5.8 **Making decisions on what we will do more of, continue, do differently or stop altogether:** We will pull together our corporate priorities, our core offer and our outcomes and use this foundation to make our decisions about which of our current activities we will stop, as well as which new activities we will start and which of our existing activities we will further invest in.

6. Implications

6.1 Financial implications

- 6.1.1 The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (Item 3) is currently estimating a financial shortfall in the region of £17.8m per year by 2019/20, though it should be noted that this is subject to potential significant change as Government policy and the underlying assumptions are firmed up.
- 6.1.2 The Council has reshaped and transformed into an effective, efficient, high performing and sustainable Future Council. This has provided the foundations to ensure we are in a position to achieve our agreed priorities and outcomes as we continue our journey to 2020. This has enabled us to identify a series of proposals in the early stages of our work and underpin the ongoing work to deliver the Council's 2020 outcomes framework.
- 6.1.3 If agreed, these proposals not only have the potential to make significant inroads into the aforementioned financial gap but the innovative changes to service delivery aided by the Improvement and Growth Fund (see 5.7 above) will ensure that our 2020 outcomes are delivered by a sustainable future council.
- 6.1.4 Work will continue over the summer to finalise our proposals with the full involvement of our colleagues and stakeholders over the coming months.

6.2 Workforce implications

- 6.2.1 A robust Workforce Plan is an integral part of our business and financial planning through to 2020. The appropriate capacity and capability required, an assessment of the current skills existent in the workforce and any gaps against essential future requirements all need to be identified. It is important to note that the workforce is not just the employed capacity, the ability of the employed workforce to be agile and flexible to meet the changing customer demands over the next three years will be paramount.
- 6.2.2 Employees are our biggest asset and we will continue to deliver our Workforce Development Strategy and develop and deliver our workforce development programme to ensure we have the right people, with the right skills, knowledge and behaviours required to achieve our outcomes and organisational sustainability.
- 6.2.3 The financial savings required between 2017 and 2020 will inevitably lead to a further reduction in our workforce and any reorganisations will be dealt with consistently through the Managing Change procedure and process.
- 6.2.4 Having considered the information gathered in developing the workforce plan, the workforce development requirements for each Business Unit will be identified. In addition to the service specific requirements, from a strategic perspective the following challenges will need to be addressed:
- Less siloed, more integrated working across Business Units

- Succession planning where the demographic data anticipates a loss of skills and knowledge during this period
- IT Literacy across the workforce.
- Social Media and Digital Technology capability, workforce agility and flexibility will require this.
- Programme and Project management skills will need to improve to ensure maximum efficiency across all of our work.
- Coaching and Mentoring to support improved performance and wellbeing at all levels.

6.2.5 It is also important that we find a way to empower employees to be as creative and innovative as possible in whatever job they do, notwithstanding the challenges ahead, work should be enjoyable and rewarding.

6.3 Member implications

6.3.1 The councillor as a local representative occupies a central position in the dynamics of local communities. The very fact that councillors are drawn from the local community gives them an insight into its problems, priorities and requirements that is necessary for developing local solutions and taking action locally. Increasingly councillors have a role to play in managing public expectations, motivating and inspiring communities, encouraging and facilitating community capacity and leadership, breaking down barriers and challenging disabling responses to community activists. A new set of core competencies may well be required for councillors to help them to focus on how to optimise their critical role in enhancing the effectiveness of their communities and to feel as comfortable being enablers as decision makers. This will be reflected in the design of the member development programme.

Our Area Governance arrangements have supported us on this journey as members have gained greater skills, knowledge and insight however we will need to work harder at bringing the public sector system and communities together at a local level to effect sustainable change in our communities.

There will also be a need to ensure that members are able to play an appropriate and effective role in securing proper accountability for the decisions which will be taken at a City Region level through the development of the Sheffield City Region Devolution agenda through the Mayoral Combined Authority.

6.4 Communications implications

6.4.1 Communication has been a key part of implementing Future Council, with a robust communications plan supporting and engaging people in its delivery. It will be crucial to clearly communicate the role of a modern local authority, including our Outcomes, to the residents of Barnsley. Our community engagement needs to include campaigns which consistently drive key methods around self-help and resilience. Messages can be delivered through social marketing via our website, Open News and community magazines.

6.4.2 We will produce an internal change communications plan and deliver this by directing timely communications via existing channels such as Terris Talk, Straight Talk, the intranet and Talkabout sessions as well as other channels.

7. Glossary

- liP – Investors in People
- IT – Information Technology
- LGC – Local Government Chronicle
- SCR – Sheffield City Region
- SMT – Senior Management Team

Background papers

- Future Council 2020 Outcomes Framework
- Future Council 2020 Improvement and Growth Board Terms of Reference
- Future Council 2020 Timeline
- Medium Term Financial Strategy
- Council of the Year Supporting Document/Application
- Future Council: Achieving Excellence (Cab.2.12.2015/6)
- Corporate Plan 2015-18 (Cab.8.6.2015)
- Our Future Council Update (Cab.8.10.2014/6)
- Future Council Change Programme (Cab.4.6.2014/6)
- Our Future Council Cabinet Report (Cab.15.1.2014/6)

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