



Committee and Date

Council

28 February 2019

**PORTFOLIO HOLDER REPORT
CORPORATE PLAN, FINANCIAL STRATEGY AND RISK MANAGEMENT
PETER NUTTING: LEADER, SHROPSHIRE COUNCIL**

1. Summary

The primary strategy of the Council is the Corporate Plan. All other strategies flow from the Corporate Plan, particularly the Financial Strategy and the Risk Strategy and together these documents form the key strategic approach of the Authority.

The first Corporate Plan of the Unitary Council was approved by the Council in December 2016. This was a huge step forward and, following recommendations of the Corporate Peer Review in April 2018, the Cabinet worked to refresh this with the involvement of Members. As a result, our Vision and Priorities have changed as follows:

The Council's Vision is: Innovate to thrive.

The Council's priorities are:

- More people with a suitable home.
- Care for those in need at any age.
- A good place to do business.
- A healthy environment.
- Sustainable places and communities.
- Embrace our rurality.

The new Corporate Plan was approved by Council on 13 December 2018 and can be found at <https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/media/11903/new-sc-corpplan-dec18-r7.pdf>

The Financial Strategy of the Council supports the Corporate Plan and I am grateful to the Portfolio Holder for Finance for his contribution which has improved the Council's management of finance. Whilst all local authorities are under financial pressure, the Council's ability to manage this, whilst also 'getting on' with other important work, has made a step forward. Becoming more efficient and raising income has enabled the Council to manage financial pressures. The Council's Financial Strategy may be found at

<http://shropshire.gov.uk/committee-services/documents/s21155/20190213%20Cabinet%20Financial%20Strategy%20v2.pdf>

It is vital that all organisations manage their risks. This is fundamentally important at a time when risk is increased due to the pace of change and financial pressure. The Senior Team of the Council review risks on a quarterly basis and the Strategic Risks Report is brought to the Cabinet and Directors' meetings also on a three monthly basis.

2. Priorities for a New Cabinet

When I became Leader in May 2017, I set two clear priorities for the Council:

- To improve our performance in economic development.
- To improve the culture of the Council.

Economic Development

Financial constraints had prior to 2017 held the Council back from fulfilling its potential in economic development. Lou Holtz said 'In this world you're either growing or you're dying, so get in motion and grow'.

It is vital for our communities that we grow our economy in a sustainable way by encouraging business and enabling them to create jobs and prosperity. The Economic Strategy of the Council sets out how we intend to do this. I want to congratulate my Cabinet, and particularly the outgoing Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Planning, Nic Laurens, for our achievements so far, which include:

- (1) The purchase of the Shrewsbury Shopping Centres, generating over £3m of income per annum to support vital services.
- (2) Plans to develop Shrewsbury, our County Town.
- (3) Plans being prepared for each of our Market Towns.
- (4) A developer secured for the Ironbridge Power Station.
- (5) The renewal of the 'Local Plan' with ambitions for new growth sites.
- (6) Development of the M54.
- (7) Announcements of funding for the North West Relief Road.
- (8) Establishing a Housing Company.

Culture of the Council

I want the Council to be 'efficient and helpful'. The Cabinet has set the expectation that our staff will continue to have and develop further a can-do and solution focussed mind-set. To support this we are encouraging more decision making and empowerment of those closest to the front line where our work takes place. In the development of this approach we have:

- (1) Developed a Leadership Programme for Senior Leaders and new 'Future Leaders' feedback has indicated a high satisfaction. There were 31 Future Leaders who self-selected for inclusion on the programme which resulted in cohorts from a cross section of the organisation and mixture of grades. The Senior Leaders' Programme consisted of 36 senior staff.
- (2) Developed a Workforce Strategy which details our approach to the changing nature of the workforce. To support this we have also developed a Workforce Transformation Plan.
- (3) Staff successfully participated in a West Midlands Region Local Authority Challenge competition. Participants spent the day as the management team of a fictional local authority encountering many of the tasks that a real corporate team deals with.
- (4) Undertaken a Corporate Peer Review.

Corporate Peer Review

Councils are encouraged to undertake a Corporate Peer Review every 5 years or so. Shropshire Council had not undertaken a Corporate Peer Review since becoming a Unitary Council in 2009. This was long overdue and so I initiated a Corporate Peer Review which took place in April 2018. The report of the Review Team was presented to Council on the 26 July 2018 and can be found by clicking [here](#). The high-level findings of the review were as follows:

- Strong sense of identity and commitment.
- Leaders are ambitious for Shropshire.
- Evidence of delivering good services at low cost and some significant projects.
- Seize the opportunities of a new administration.
- Clarify the narrative (vision and what the council stands for) and translate into specific deliverables.
- Free up and create capacity.
- Continue to move from operational to strategic focus.
- Still work to do to secure financial sustainability.

In response to the Peer Review, Members were engaged in a series of workshops in the summer and autumn 2018, and an Action Plan was devised as a result. This is being presented to full Council on the 28 February 2019 for approval. The Peer Review Action Plan can be found [here](#).

I anticipate the Review Team returning to Shropshire before the end of the summer 2019 to consider our progress since the review took place.

Structure and Pay

I believe that having the right structure and staff in place is the key to success. With support from the LGA, I have reviewed the Senior Management structure and their recommendations have been implemented. This included restoring the levels of pay in Shropshire to comparable rates with the rest of the Local Authority sector. This was necessary to improve retention and recruitment of key staff.

External Partnerships

The Council does not 'exist in a bubble' and we cannot achieve our goals in isolation. We work with a number of external partners and partnerships too numerous to list, but I want to highlight some of them here:

- (1) Town and Parish Councils: I see Town and Parish Councils as being vital to our future and I have met with all of them to understand their needs, aspirations and how we can work together.
- (2) University Centre, Shrewsbury: The Council is a key partner in developing the University which is focussed on attracting young people to the County and keeping them here.
- (3) Sustainable Transformation Plan (STP): The STP brings together partners across Health and Social Care. This is our highest area of spending and one where our influence and action could bring significant benefits for our communities. I expect our involvement and ambition to escalate following the recent appointment of Sir Neil McKay as the STP Independent Chair.
- (4) West Midlands' Combined Authority: The Combined Authority is still in its infancy and our role within it is yet to become clear. However, it is possible that some of the Combined Authority funds could be available to Shropshire and we have the outputs they require, such as development of housing and commercial/industrial premises.
- (5) One Public Estate: This programme has the potential to rationalise the estate and share buildings across the public sector. Shropshire Council is seen as a leading 'Exemplar' by the LGA, particularly for our proposed development of the Shirehall and Health Hubs.

Future Strategy Development

Phase 1 of our Digital Transformation is coming to a close and this will deliver new, more stable IT platforms with the capability to move the Council into the digital age. However, this capacity can only be exploited if we change the way we do things. Using the new technology platform in the old way will not deliver the change we need. Therefore, as we go forward, we will be developing a

Transformation Plan and I expect to appoint a Portfolio Holder to oversee this important work.

I would like to thank Councillor Cecilia Motely for her excellent work in networking with the Government and particularly her role as Chair of the Rural Services Network (RSN). The Rural Services Network has set out why and how to Government as to how they should develop a 'Rural Strategy'. Over the next Financial Year I want to develop our own Rural Strategy, or otherwise engage Members in testing our current Strategy and Policy Framework for 'Rural Proofing'.

List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)

None.

Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)

Councillor Peter Nutting.

Local Member

Appendices

None.