Key Decision [~~Yes~~/No]

Ward(s) Affected: All

Becoming a council for the community: principles and approach

Report by the Chief Executive

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Executive Summary

> **1.   Purpose**
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> 1.1.   The purpose of this report is to outline how Worthing Council will deliver on the Labour Administration's commitment to become 'a council for the community'.
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> 1.2.   The key pillars of the Council's participative approach reflect the vision of the Council: fair, green and local. This paper outlines what these mean in terms of the way the council works with the community and its partners as well as where it steps back to enable communities to be better able to act for themselves.
>
> 1.3.   The report sets out the commitment to make the best use of council assets in order to create an abundance of community action, where Worthing Council makes change happen in partnership and in co-production with the community.
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> 1.4.   A foundation to this, as with our economic approach, is community wealth building. This is a people-centred approach to local economic development, which redirects wealth back into the local economy, and places control and benefits into the hands of local people.

1.5. This kind of step change in the relationship between the Council and its community will take time. This paper sets out our first steps in this direction and outlines an open and participative approach to developing this work going forward.

2. Recommendations

2.1. Set up a working group to manage progress which should include officers, members and representatives from community groups and to delegate to the Chief Executive authority to agree the terms of reference for the working group in consultation with the Leader which shall include the requirement to report back to the Committee (at such intervals to be agreed in the terms of reference) with further recommendations to the Committee.

2.2. For the Working Group to design and develop outcome measures and a roadmap to be reported to the Committee with agreed outcome measures published every 6 months.

2.3. Initiate review of identified policies and strategies in section 7 in order to embed these principles.

3. Background

3.1 Worthing Council believes that communities which have more influence and control over what happens locally are both stronger and more resilient. The Council's long term ambition is therefore to, where possible, pass power and control over what happens within communities, to communities.

3.2 Worthing Council has an ambitious agenda for change which goes beyond the scope of what the council directly controls. Working effectively in partnership and co-production with our communities, our citizens and our partners is the only way in which the full extent of these ambitions can be realised.

3.3 The Council for the Community Roadmap will help to bring together the community participation ambitions which link all of the Executive

portfolio areas - creating an infrastructure where communities can work together across all agendas.

3.2   'Community' is a complex concept which can be described as working at three levels which are outlined below:

3.2.1   The **foundational layer** is defined by the connectivity and inclusion in communities in the places people live. Worthing Council's principles for working in this layer will be:

   3.2.1.1   To work towards communities, based on the geography of the 'map of place' (see section 6.2) are informed and aware of who is there - the principle here making sure that communities are experts in their own data. This means presenting data and insights through the lens of how people talk about and name where they live rather than working within administrative boundaries (for example wards) and sharing that data with our communities.

   3.2.1.2   To support and work with communities and our local businesses, to create the conditions where principles of inclusion are live and active and where communities are able to welcome differences and newcomers into those networks.

   3.2.1.3   The key outcome in this foundational layer will be to work towards an 'infrastructure of belonging' which is where people feel they know where the heart of their community is, they know how to access help and they are also part of offering help as well.

   3.2.1.4   Final element of the foundational layer will be active and effective listening, building on the starting point of the Big Listen work to create infrastructure that will facilitate on-going participative listening.

3.2.2   The second layer is a **deliberative layer** which will have a set of tools and approaches which brings people together to work through differences or to come to a set of shared priorities. Deliberation can be supported through a variety of methods, all of which enable people to come together to examine data and viewpoints and explore solutions. This is something that we have seen really successfully

with the Climate Assembly

        3.2.2.1   The deliberative layer is important as it gives us decision making models where people can participate in a process.

        3.2.2.2   In this deliberative layer will 'live' the working groups described in section 7.5.

        3.2.2.3   In this layer we will draw on tools and approaches such as deep democracy (an approach which brings together community connection & cohesion with deliberative methods), participatory research (where communities use action research to make sense of the challenges they face together) as well as models such as citizen assemblies or world cafe deliberative forums.

    3.2.3   The third layer is around more **formal delegated decision making** which refers to the passing of power and control directly into communities.   This could mean traditional models such as parish and town councils or more innovative models such as the 'flat pack democracy' approach which was developed in Frome. This is something to work towards in partnership with communities who want to take this step.

    3.2.5   The next section outlines how the Council for the Communities programme will embed the administration's manifesto commitments to be 'fair, green and local'.

4.0   Our principles: Fair

    4.1   A council for the community needs to be for all of the community and create inclusive spaces where everybody is able to speak up and to have their voice heard. The Council for the Community roadmap will take a data informed approach to look at all aspects of equalities and diversity such as ethnicity, background or ability but also age and intergenerational justice, disability and inclusion.

    4.2   Worthing Council will work to create the conditions for groups and individuals to act as citizens, whether or not people choose to take it. This means exploring people's rights and responsibilities and helping

create the context where groups work with common purpose and principles.

4.3   This will mean creating decision making and deliberative forums which can work with elected politicians to drive meaningful change for our communities. This means creating safe spaces where groups can work together and with the council. The first steps with this can be seen in the new approach to the community infrastructure levy (CIL) outlined on [REF].

5.0. Our principles: Green

5.1   Our approach to the climate and ecological emergencies is rooted in community action and co-production of solutions.

5.2   In exploring the participative aspect of the climate emergency there is the opportunity to connect to and build on a wide range of climate action initiatives across carbon, nature and circular economy agendas.

5.3   There is a significant opportunity to engage across our communities, to support grass roots action, remove barriers and give permission to community led action; and help make connections, including supporting funding applications for local projects and inviting participation in council-led initiatives such as the Cissbury Fields nature recovery project.

5.4   The opportunity to engage businesses large and small will also be key, providing opportunities for corporate social responsibility contributions and enabling effective volunteering from local workforces.

5.5   Our work will maintain focus on a just transition, mindful of the potential for inequities to be reinforced given the current costs involved in transitions to low carbon technology, locally sourced food etc in the context of the cost of living crisis.

6.   Our principles: Local

6.1   As outlined in the WSSC Paper 'New economic principles for Worthing we will adopt an approach of community wealth building; a people-centred approach to local economic development that seeks to provide resilience where there is risk and local economic security where there is uncertainty.

6.2   While the council for the community roadmap will work across the whole of Worthing, the Council will develop a 'map of place' which reflects more natural community and geographical boundaries, rather than the administrative boundaries of wards. This approach also fits with the 15 minute neighbourhood model - the idea that the infrastructure of everyday life should be within a 15 minute walk of home - which underpins thinking on the public realm and planning.

7.   Our Roadmap

In designing the council for the community roadmap we will use the following elements:

7.1   **Digital as infrastructure:** Worthing Council has made significant progress with its digital transformation work and as can be seen in the response to financial challenges this continues to be a core element of Our Plan (ref) in developing delivery approaches for both Adur and Worthing councils. The council for the community roadmap will develop digital civic tools which can be used both by and with the community. This approach has already been tested with the Big Listen and with the budget consultation process.

7.2   This development of digital infrastructure will be partnered with the development of **physical infrastructure.** This will be codesigned with our communities and will be developed in line with the map of place approach which draws together all areas of the Council's work. This strand of work will use our current assets as well as thinking more widely about how to create single shared community spaces which people can walk to.

7.3   **Participation skills and capacity:** In order to ensure access to the skills we need to facilitate and deliver this roadmap, and to further the participative principle embedded in Our Plan the Council will:

    a.   Train and support people to be participation practitioners from within our own work force.
    b.   Open us this training and support to members of the community

7.4   **Iterate and experiment:** the council for the community roadmap will include a number of experiments and prototype approaches which can be the basis of shared learning as well as specific projects which can

also contribute to the overall objective of devolved community power. This roadmap of work will include:

  c.   The next phase of the Big Listen, including the planned cost of living event programme
  d.   Changes to the way the community infrastructure levy is administered
  e.   An exploratory food summit which will bring together different parts of our food summit to create a shared approach
  f.   Build on our work with warm hubs as part of the Cost of Living roadmap
  g.   Continue our participatory work at Cissbury Fields
  h.   Our work with the community is in West Durrington

7.5   The Council for the Community roadmap will coordinate the different working groups that are being set up around other strategic agendas to ensure common approaches to terms of reference and to ensure that topics don't get 'stuck' in one group where they would better be held between groups. A good example of this will be the work on food which cuts across a number of agendas. These working groups will include:

  a.   Climate working group
  b.   Economic principles working group
  c.   Cost of Living working group
  d.   Arts forum

7.6   In addition to the specific commitments above we will also ensure our participative thinking is embedded into the daily operations of the council.

7.7   We will therefore develop a roadmap in Q2 2023 to review relevant policies and strategies in order to reflect these economic principles. This roadmap will include:

  a.   A new young people's strategy
  b.   A review of our Asset management strategy
  c.   Input into a Workforce Strategy to reflect the skills needed to support this approach

8.   Engagement and Communication

8.1 This document sets out plans to engage with the wider community in order to develop the strategies and policies needed to respond to the principles and priorities laid out here.

9. Financial Implications

9.1 With the exception of a proposed investment in digital infrastructure proposed part of the 23/24 budget, it is expected that much of the costs of this roadmap will be funded from our existing budgets or via external funding. However, if this is not possible then members will be consulted on the release of additional resources.

10. Legal Implications

10.1 Under Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council has the power to do anything that is calculated to facilitate, or which is conducive or incidental to, the discharge of any of their functions.

10.2 s1 of the Localism Act 2011 empowers the Council to do anything an individual can do apart from that which is specifically prohibited by pre-existing legislation

10.3 Section 3(1) of the Local Government Act 1999 (LGA 1999) contains a general duty on a best value authority to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

Background Papers
None.

Sustainability & Risk Assessment

1.   Economic

Matter considered and no issues identified.

2.   Social

2.1   The work outlined in this report is expressly designed to increase social outcomes - building participatory infrastructure and capability in order to help our communities thrive.

3.   Equality Issues

3.1   The councils are subject to the general equality duty set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. This duty covers the following protected characteristics: age, gender, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, and sexual orientation.

3.2   In delivering the plan the councils must have due regard to the need to:

   a. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
   b. Advance equality of opportunity between different groups
   c. Foster good relations between different groups

3.3   The participative principle describes the councils' commitment to providing truly inclusive services by listening to underrepresented voices, creating equal access and meeting our equality duties.

3.4   Given the breadth of work proposed and the complexity of relevant protected characteristics and their intersections it is not possible to analyse all the impacts of the plan in relation to legally protected characteristics. However, the council's legal duties (Equality Act 2010) will shape the development of the roadmap, in relation to eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations.

3.5   Actions and areas of investment identified in the plan, as well as other decisions relating to implementation of the plan, will require Equality Impact Assessments as proposals are brought forward to relevant committees.

4. Community Safety Issues (Section 17)
The councils are committed to the promotion of communities as safe places.

5. Human Rights Issues
Matter considered and no issues identified.

6. Environmental
This work will support the participatory element of the council's climate and ecological action plans.

7. Governance
Matter considered and no issues identified.