

Report to Cabinet

November 2020

WSCC Reset Plan

Report by Chief Executive

Electoral division(s): All

Summary

This report sets out the process that is being taken to develop West Sussex County Council's Reset Plan – the corporate plan for the organisation. It presents the first iteration of the plan following a process of engagement with staff, elected Members, partners and residents from across the county.

The first draft of the plan takes the priority outcomes agreed by Full Council in July 2020 and develops the more specific outcomes we want to achieve and the activities that the Council will lead, deliver, enable or facilitate to do so. This work is set in the backdrop of a significant financial challenge over the next four years, in which we will need to save more than £100m. The Reset Plan is being developed alongside the budget and medium term financial strategy, meaning the outcomes and activities in the plan will be delivered within the available resources.

Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to:

- (1) Approve the first iteration of the Reset Plan for further consideration by the County Council at its December meeting (attached at Appendix A)
 - (2) Approve the timeline for ongoing development of the Reset Plan, (attached at Appendix B)
 - (3) Invite each of the scrutiny committees to consider in January 2021 how the Reset Plan's measures and performance information can be set and used to enable effective scrutiny of the Council's aims and agreed outcomes relevant to their areas of business; and to invite Performance and Finance Scrutiny Committee to provide guidance to the scrutiny committees in terms of principles and methods for effective scrutiny of performance to assist them in that task.
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1 Background and context

- 1.1 Our experience of supporting communities through Covid-19 has helped the County Council consolidate and strengthen the progress that had already started. In the first wave of the pandemic, staff were redeployed, partnership working was accelerated, and we have transformed our digital capability, supporting a predominantly remote workforce. As we continue to deal with the ongoing pandemic, we are building on what have done in 2020 and reflecting it in the Reset Plan.
- 1.2 Although we have made significant progress in key service areas like Children's Services, Fire & Rescue as well as with our corporate governance, we must not forget where we were before the pandemic. We know we needed to change and the good governance project identified key areas for us to focus on, including a commitment to put residents at the heart of everything we do; to create strong and visible collective member and officer leadership; to work closely with partners; to invest in and value our staff; and to make the way we work as straightforward as possible.
- 1.3 We have demonstrated to ourselves and to others during Covid-19 what we are capable of and the uncompromising commitment of members and our workforce to the residents of West Sussex. We have shown through the cooperation across the health and social care sector and the formation of the community hubs, that we can work well with partners. Things are different already, but we need to keep changing to build on the progress we have made.
- 1.4 It is vital that the County Council develops an integrated business and financial planning cycle that is based on a good understanding of the local evidence base, the national and local policy context, a comprehensive understanding of the financial position (revenue and capital) and the service challenges in meeting the needs of residents, businesses and communities.
- 1.5 The Reset process brings together our policy, business, financial planning and risk management processes. It will be the vehicle for the County Council's decision making and planning to ensure we are making the very best use of the resources available, understanding the value for money we deliver and focussed on our priority outcomes. It will also ensure we understand the implications of the tough choices that will need to be made in the face of huge resource and demand challenges and also uncertainty.

2 Principles

- 2.1 Given the financial challenge we face and the changing nature of demand on our services, we know we have to reset our priorities now, but we must do it in a way that is collaborative and inclusive. As such, we are developing the plan with staff, partners and members to ensure we go on the journey together and make the plan real and focused on the most important things we all need to do in West Sussex. We must do all of this by making the best use of the funding we have.
- 2.2 We have been working to a set of principles agreed at Full Council in July, which underpin the approach we are taking.

Table 1 – Principles

| Principle | What we are aiming for |
|---|---|
| 1. Led and made in West Sussex reflecting residents, communities and businesses needs and building on our strengths | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A plan with a sense of identity for West Sussex • A plan that is developed and owned by our staff, partners and elected Members |
| 2. Strong learning from our own and others' experiences including COVID-19 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pausing, listening and reflecting great work we know about • Reflecting what our communities need most from us |
| 3. Based in realistic optimism and a sustainable business plan (performance, resources and risks) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have a sense of direction and are clear on what we are doing and how we will know we've been successful • We prioritise what we do and deliver within the smaller budget envelope we now have |
| 4. Held together consistently with a focus on agreed priorities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A plan that focuses on the outcomes we want to see for West Sussex and we can say which priority we deliver on and the role WSCC staff play to achieve them |
| 5. Providing clarity about what successful outcomes look like in 12 months' time. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have a clear set of measures that everyone understands and will tell us if we've been successful |

3 Developing the Reset Plan

- 3.1 Our approach to developing this first iteration of the Reset Plan has been to involve staff, partners and elected members in the process, and use the research we have already done with residents (including during Covid-19) to reflect what we should focus on and why, and use our learning from the Good Governance Project and improvement activity already taking place across the organisation. This has meant that we have a plan that is being 'led and made in West Sussex' and can be built upon further. The following activities have been part of the process:

- Workshops with WSCC staff and external partners – workshops involving the top 100 senior managers in WSCC and more than 50 partners from across West Sussex have provided an opportunity to build a plan that is both reflective of what WSCC will do on its own and in partnership with others
- Webchat with WSCC staff – Becky Shaw hosted an online conversation with WSCC staff where staff were able to ask questions and suggest what they thought should be reflected in the plan
- The Big Exchange – WSCC staff were able to post ideas and suggestions on what they wanted to see in the plan using on an online platform available to all staff
- Community conversations – led by the WSCC Communities team, 20 semi-structured interviews were conducted with voluntary and community sector organisations and other local public bodies
- Covid-19 resident research – we have used the survey conducted after the first wave of the pandemic to gauge what is important to residents and what needs to be prioritised in the plan
- Elected member engagement – an all-Member session was hosted on 12 November 2020 sharing the first draft of the plan and capturing views on the content of the plan. This will be reported to the Cabinet at its meeting on 24th November and further for the report to the County Council in December.
- Scrutiny – the invitation to Performance and Finance Committee on 3rd December is to help set some principles and methods for the scrutiny of the Plan once it has been approved and this will be built upon by the other Scrutiny Committees in January by reference to the sections of the plan relevant to their business.

4 Reset Plan priorities and delivery outcomes

- 4.1 The process we have taken has enabled us to iterate the four priority outcomes underpinned by the theme of climate change agreed by Full Council in July 2020. Through the engagement we have been able to shape the outcomes we want to see. These are set out in Table 2 below alongside the specific outcomes we want to achieve.

Table 2 – Reset Plan priorities and outcomes

| Priority | Outcomes we want to achieve |
|---|---|
| 1. Keeping people safe from vulnerable situations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early help to prevent needs escalating • Support to people when they need it • Independence in later life • Working in partnership |
| 2. A sustainable and prosperous economy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resetting and rebooting the local economy • Achieving social value in West Sussex • Sustainable growth by developing modern infrastructure |

| | |
|---|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting people to develop the skills they need for the future • A sustainable economy that tackles climate change • Working in partnership |
| 3. Helping people and communities to fulfil their potential | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to excellent education and learning • Tackling inequality • Promoting and enabling independence • Safe, connected and cohesive communities |
| 4. Making the best use of resources | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working together as 'one council' • Getting the best from our people • Maximising our income and the productivity of our assets • Value for money • Working in partnership |

- 4.2 The draft of the plan in Appendix A sets out activities we will undertake to achieve these outcomes and deliver on the priorities.

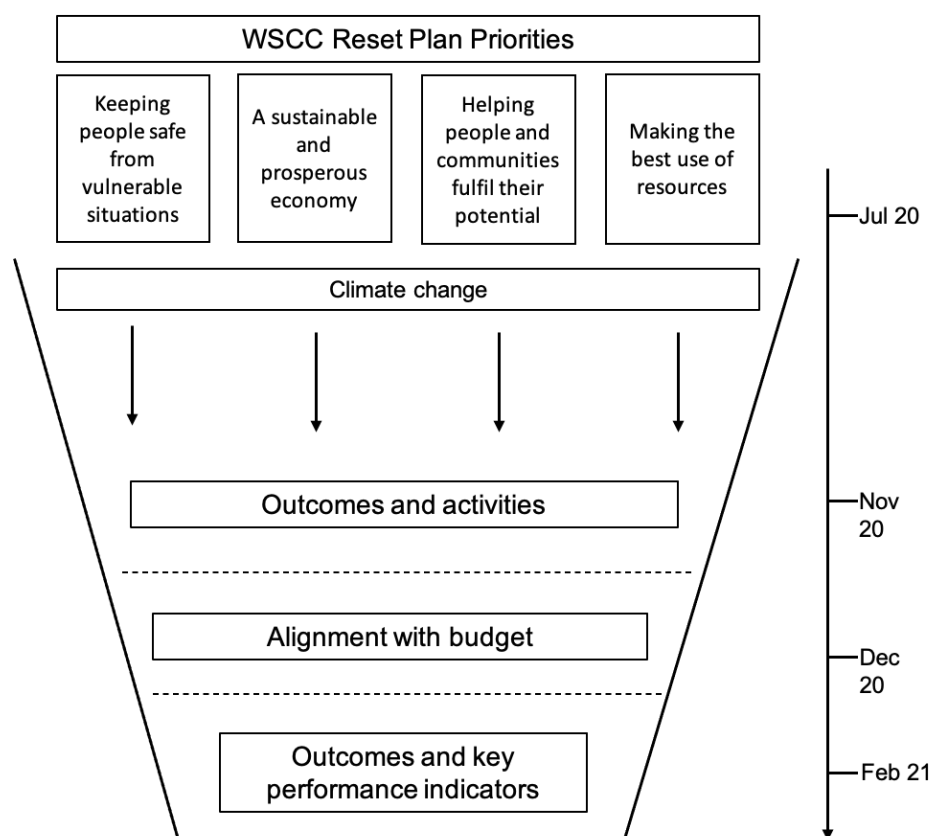
5 Iterating the Reset Plan

- 5.1 Over the next two months we will continue iterating the plan. The next set of activities include:

- All-member engagement – using the feedback from the all-member workshop on 12 November to update the plan
- Delivery planning – planning the activities we are going to undertake in more detail, with timescales and alignment to outcomes and budget
- Key performance indicators – development of key performance indicators that sit alongside the outcomes and priorities and will act as measures of success
- Equality impact assessment – an assessment of the impact of the overall plan on residents and communities in West Sussex
- Scrutiny of the reset plan – working with the performance and finance scrutiny committee to provide guidance to all scrutiny committees on principles and methods for effective scrutiny of the reset plan

- 5.2 Figure 1 below sets out the process we are taking alongside the high level timescales.

Figure 1 – the iterative approach to developing the plan



6 Consultation, engagement and advice

- 6.1 We have taken a collaborative approach to developing the first draft of the plan, using existing research with residents and engaging WSCC staff, partners and elected members in the process.

7 Finance

- 7.1 The approach set out above is in alignment with the development of the Medium Term Financial Strategy for West Sussex County Council and supports the delivery of a balanced budget for 2021/22 in accordance with the Council's statutory duty.
- 7.2 In the next phase of developing the plan, we will be continuing to align the budget planning and Reset Plan processes.

8 Risk implications and mitigations

- 8.1 It is critical that the council has a corporate plan in place, as it articulates the purpose of the organisation, its areas of focus and priorities, the core outcomes it wants to achieve for residents and how it will measure success. Crucially, it also determines where the organisation will spend its money and therefore must be aligned to the budget and medium term financial strategy. The following risks and mitigations are in place:

Table 3

| Risk | Mitigating Action (in place or planned) |
|---|--|
| Not having a corporate plan | The first iteration of the Reset Plan is now complete and the ongoing input from Members, staff, partners and residents will be used to update the plan, which will go to Full Council in February 2021. |
| The budget is not aligned to the Reset Plan | The budget process has run alongside the Reset Plan process throughout its development and will continue to do so as the budget proposals are developed through to Full Council in February 2021. |
| It is not clear what success looks like | We are now developing the key performance indicators that will sit alongside the priorities, outcomes and activities published in the draft plan. These will be used to measure the success of the plan. |

9 Policy alignment and compliance

- 9.1 The Reset Plan will become WSCC's corporate plan and will therefore be the foundation for policy development, governance and compliance.
- 9.2 We will be undertaking a high-level equality impact assessment as part of the next stage of work to iterate the Reset Plan.
- 9.3 Climate change is an underpinning theme in the Reset Plan and has been considered at every stage of the plan's development. The Council's Climate Change Strategy is a core part of the draft plan.
- 9.4 The Council's Social Value Framework (2019) is referenced in the draft plan and will be a core part of how we get the most for local people from the £600m that the Council spends each year.

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Appendices:

Appendix A – Draft Reset Plan

Appendix B – Timeline

Background Documents:

None