

 <b>Executive</b> <b>7<sup>th</sup> March 2018</b>		<b>Agenda Item No.</b> <b>9</b>
<b>Title</b>	A vision & strategy for Leamington town centre	
<b>For further information about this report please contact</b>	Philip Clarke Policy & Projects Manager, Development Services	
<b>Wards of the District directly affected</b>		
<b>Is the report private and confidential and not for publication by virtue of a paragraph of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006?</b>	No	
<b>Date and meeting when issue was last considered and relevant minute number</b>	O&S Committee, 8 <sup>th</sup> March 2016	
<b>Background Papers</b>	None	

<b>Contrary to the policy framework:</b>	No
<b>Contrary to the budgetary framework:</b>	No
<b>Key Decision?</b>	Yes
<b>Included within the Forward Plan? (If yes include reference number)</b>	Yes (913)
<b>Equality Impact Assessment Undertaken</b>	No
An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) was produced as part of the Local Plan. Insofar as any individual WDC projects emerge from the vision & strategy, these will be subject to their own EIAs.	

Officer/Councillor Approval		
Officer Approval	Date	Name
Chief Executive/Deputy Chief Executive	8/2/18	Bill Hunt
Head of Service	8/2/18	Dave Barber
CMT	13/2/18	Chris Elliott, Bill Hunt, Andrew Jones
Section 151 Officer	13/2/18	Mike Snow
Monitoring Officer	13/2/18	Andrew Jones
Finance	13/2/18	Mike Snow
Portfolio Holder(s)	14/2/18	Cllr. Mobbs
Consultation & Community Engagement		
The vision & strategy for Leamington town centre was undertaken a by a group of stakeholders and also subject to wider stakeholder and public engagement. Details are contained in the body of the report.		
Final Decision?		Yes
Suggested next steps (if not final decision please set out below)		

## 1. **Summary**

- 1.1 This report summarises the work of the Leamington Town Centre Forum, of which the Council is a member, which was formed in 2016 to prepare a vision & strategy for Leamington town centre. The report presents the conclusion of the work of the Forum, and proposes how the Council should respond to the challenges identified by the vision & strategy.

## 2. **Recommendation**

### 2.1 That Executive:-

- 2.1.1 Notes the work of the Leamington Town Centre Forum in preparing and consulting on a vision and strategy for Leamington town centre.
- 2.1.2 Supports the "Vision & Strategy for Leamington town centre" contained in appendix 1.
- 2.1.3 Supports officers continuing to work with partner organisation in the Forum to monitor and review the "Vision & Strategy" document as appropriate and to deliver the actions within it in accordance with wider workload and priorities.

## 3. **Reasons for the Recommendation**

- 3.1 During 2015, officers held a number of wide ranging initial discussions with a number of stakeholder groups with an active interest and involvement in Leamington town centre. These groups included Leamington Town Council, Warwickshire County Council, BID Leamington and Leamington Chamber of Trade, the University of Warwick Students Union and the Leamington Society. These discussions were prompted by the (then) emerging policies of the new Local Plan and the aspiration of Leamington Town Council to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan.
- 3.2 It was clear from these discussions that despite the varying perspectives of the different stakeholder groups, there was a significant consensus around what any "vision" for Leamington town centre may comprise in general terms. Furthermore, there was an appetite from stakeholders to work with the Council to develop a more detailed vision and strategy. Accordingly, at the instigation of the Council, a "Leamington Town Centre Forum" was formed in 2016. The Forum had the specific remit to develop a strategy for Leamington town centre, consider delivery and implementation issues arising from the strategy and consider who may take these forward and how this may be done.
- 3.3 Members of the Forum included key organisations that are active in the management of Leamington town centre or in delivering services within it. It also included representatives of the business community, local residents and the University of Warwick (including the Students Union). The members of the Forum were:-
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• BID Leamington</li><li>• Leamington Society</li><li>• Purple Monster (representing small businesses including those within Old Town)</li><li>• Royal Leamington Spa Chamber of Trade</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Royal Leamington Spa Town Council</li><li>• Royal Priors Shopping Centre &amp; Regent Court</li><li>• University of Warwick</li><li>• University of Warwick Students Union</li></ul> |
|--|--|

- Wareing & Company (representing commercial agents)
- Warwick District Council
- Warwickshire County Council
- Warwickshire Police

3.4 It was agreed that membership of the Forum would be officer-led. No councillors (Country, District or Town) attended Forum meetings. All three councils, however, undertook to report the progress of the Forum's work back to their respective councils. For Warwick District Council, the work on the Forum was led by Deputy Chief Executive Bill Hunt, supported by Philip Clarke from Development Services. To keep members informed about the progress of the Forum, the Council established a Member Reference Group made up of councillors Hayley Grainger, Gifford, Naimo and Davison (one representative from each party with a ward representation in Leamington). This Member Reference Group has met on several occasions to discuss the work of the Forum.

3.5 The Forum first met in the summer of 2016 and then several times over the following months to put together a draft vision and a strategy. It reviewed evidence relating to the town centre (including that produced by the Council as we prepared the Local Plan) and looked at previous and emerging strategies. Through the discussions, a number of key priority themes emerged, and the Forum gathered these together as a series of "big ideas". These were on the themes of:-

- A thriving town centre
- A connected town centre
- Places & spaces to meet
- Revealing Leamington's waterways
- A hub for creativity
- Enhancing Old Town

3.6 Having developed these ideas, the Forum held a series of stakeholder workshops in the early part of 2017 to which key organisations and individuals who live, work, visit and invest in Leamington town centre were invited. The Forum then reviewed the comments made at these workshops before preparing a draft vision & strategy which it was ready to put before the public. The Forum consulted with local people in the autumn of 2017 including at a public exhibition which it ran during the Leamington Food & Drink Festival in early September. It also created a website ([www.learmingtonvision.co.uk](http://www.learmingtonvision.co.uk)) and invited comments to be made online.

3.7 In the autumn and winter of 2017 the Forum met to review the output of the public engagement and produced its final "Vision & Strategy for Leamington town centre". A copy of this document is included as **appendix 1**. The final document now includes:-

- a vision for Leamington town centre
- the six "big ideas"
- A more detailed Action Plan identifying those organisations with particular responsibility for delivering elements of the vision & strategy.

3.8 Having completed its work, all of the members of the Forum agreed to present the "Vision & Strategy" document back to their parent organisations and ask them, where appropriate, to formally support it. This is particularly the case in respect of the three councils and the document is being, or has already been, presented to each.

- 3.9 Having done this, the work of the Forum has now ended. Forum members did, however, agree (subject to the support of their parent bodies):-
- 1) that all the organisations with responsibility for delivering the Action Plan would continue to consider how they can work together to better deliver the actions, including by working in different ways and in partnership together.
  - 2) That members of the Forum would continue to meet on an occasional basis to monitor the Vision & Strategy document and hold organisations to account for the actions in it. This group may also consider, in the future, whether it may wish to review and “refresh” the Vision & Strategy.
- 3.9 In accordance with the agreement to report the Vision & Strategy back to the Council, Executive is now being asked to support the document. In doing so, members are invited to note the following:-
- 1) The document reflects a number of key District Council priorities including the redevelopment of the Covent Garden car park and Creative Quarter. Where it refers to potential changes to District Council assets (eg: the Town Hall, Chandos Street car park), these are in line with either (a) current Council policy (such as in the Local Plan), (b) commitments to undertake work (such as the commitment to develop a student housing strategy for Warwick District) or (c) emerging thinking (eg: an understanding that a new use will need to be found for the Town Hall once this is vacated by the Council.)
  - 2) In preparing the “vision & strategy”, the Forum reviewed evidence relating to Leamington town centre, much of which came from the Council (including that prepared for the Local Plan). The vision & strategy has been informed by this evidence.
  - 3) The “Vision & Strategy” does not, and was never intended to, augment or replace existing land-use planning policy or the Council’s own corporate strategy. It will have no statutory weight as a planning document. Rather, its value and strength lies in the collaborative way in which it has been produced by a wide range of organisations. This has allowed the connections between the different activities of different groups to be looked at “in the round”. For example, the relationship between different activities undertaken by different bodies (eg: WDC, WCC, developers) to help promote a “connected town centre” can be more clearly seen. It will provide a useful tool to hold organisations (including the District Council) to account for commitments they have made. It will also provide a useful tool for Leamington Town Council as it continues to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan for Leamington.
  - 4) The document does provide some challenges for the Council as we move forward on a number of important pieces of work. Individual services within the Council will need to consider how the Council as a whole can respond to this. This will present challenges to services however nothing in this document runs counter to policies or commitment that the Council has already made.
  - 5) The Member Reference Group has reviewed the final Vision & strategy document and is happy to recommend to Executive that it is supported.

#### 4. Policy Framework

##### Fit for the Future (FFF)

- 4.1 The Council's FFF Strategy is designed to deliver the Vision for the District of making it a Great Place to Live, Work and Visit. To that end amongst other things the FFF Strategy contains several Key projects. This report shows the way forward for implementing a significant part of one of the Council's Key projects.
- 4.2 The FFF Strategy has 3 strands – People, Services and Money and each has an external and internal element to it. The table below illustrates the impact of this proposal if any in relation to the Council's FFF Strategy.

FFF Strands		
People	Services	Money
<b>External</b>		
<b>Health, Homes, Communities</b>	<b>Green, Clean, Safe</b>	<b>Infrastructure, Enterprise, Employment</b>
<u>Intended outcomes:</u> Improved health for all Housing needs for all met Impressive cultural and sports activities Cohesive and active communities	<u>Intended outcomes:</u> Area has well looked after public spaces All communities have access to decent open space Improved air quality Low levels of crime and ASB	<u>Intended outcomes:</u> Dynamic and diverse local economy Vibrant town centres Improved performance/ productivity of local economy Increased employment and income levels
<b>Impacts of Proposal</b>		
Supporting walking, cycling and public transport Supporting cultural and creative activities Supporting access to, and use of, Leamington railway station	Protecting and enhancing open spaces Promoting the good maintenance of open spaces Promoting creation of new open spaces Enhancing access to the canal Reducing traffic congestion Supporting a safe town centre	Supporting prosperity, local businesses and the wider and the local economy Supporting local enterprise including in the creative sector Regenerating key areas and buildings Supporting enhanced digital connectivity
<b>Internal</b>		
<b>Effective Staff</b>	<b>Maintain or Improve Services</b>	<b>Firm Financial Footing over the Longer Term</b>
<u>Intended outcomes:</u> All staff are properly trained All staff have the appropriate tools All staff are engaged, empowered and supported The right people are in	<u>Intended outcomes:</u> Focusing on our customers' needs Continuously improve our processes Increase the digital provision of services	<u>Intended outcomes:</u> Better return/use of our assets Full Cost accounting Continued cost management Maximise income earning opportunities Seek best value for

the right job with the right skills and right behaviours		money
<b>Impacts of Proposal</b>		
None – however see “maintain and improve services”	Supporting enhanced digital connectivity Supporting resource planning to ensure that key projects and initiatives can be adequately staffed and resourced.	None directly, however will allow WDC to consider resource planning and opportunities for joint/shared working with partner organisations.

### **Supporting Strategies**

- 4.3 Each strand of the FFF Strategy has several supporting strategies and the relevant ones for this proposal are explained here.
- 4.4 The recently adopted Local Plan for Warwick District provides the statutory Framework for determining planning applications. It also includes a reference to preparing a Leamington Town Centre Area Action Plan. Although the Leamington Town Centre Forum is not a Council body, officers of the Council that have sat on the Forum have made sure that the vision & strategy document broadly accords with the policies of the Local Plan. Furthermore, the vision & strategy has been reviewed against other Council policies and is broadly consistent with these.

### **Changes to Existing Policies**

- 4.5 There is nothing in this report which seeks to change existing Council policies.

## **5. Budgetary Framework**

- 5.1 There are no direct budgetary implications arising from this report. The Council has helped fund the work of the Forum. This relates primarily to the public and stakeholder engagement and the production of the final document. This has been met through existing resources.
- 5.2 It should be noted that other partner organisations within the Forum have contributed either financially or in kind throughout the preparation of the vision & strategy document, and this support has been gratefully received.

## **6. Risks**

- 6.1 This vision & strategy has been prepared following intensive collaboration between a disparate range of partner organisations operating in Leamington town centre. Having completed the work, there are two risks that arise from it.
- 6.2 There is a risk that the document could become out-of-date. This is to be mitigated by the Forum meeting on an occasional basis to review the Action Plan.
- 6.3 There is a risk that the document could “sit on a shelf” and that responsible organisations will not be held to account for undertakings given in it. The

monitoring to be undertaken by the Forum (see 6.2 above) will mitigate this to an extent. More widely, the very fact that this document has been produced will raise public awareness of commitments that have been made and will allow other partner organisations, stakeholders and the wider public to hold organisations to account for the actions within it.

## **7. Alternative Option(s) considered**

- 7.1 The Council could agree not to support the vision & strategy. This option is not supported. The Forum was established at the Council's suggestion, and officers have been heavily involved in driving the process forward. In this the Council has received considerable support from partner organisations, and the preparation of the vision & strategy document is a genuinely collaborative piece of work. Furthermore, as noted earlier, any references to, or commitments by Warwick District Council in the document reflect existing Council policies and commitments. Not to support the vision & strategy document at this stage would be against the spirit of partnership working that has underpinned the process that has been undertaken.
- 7.2 The Council could request to the Forum that further amendments are made to the vision & strategy. This could be done, however this is not recommended. The vision & strategy document has been agreed by all members of the forum through a lengthy process of discussion. It is not in the Council's gift to unilaterally change the document without the agreement of other Forum members. More importantly, a monitoring and review process has been agreed and this would be the most appropriate place for any discussions and updates to the vision & strategy to be agreed.