

**Teignbridge District Council
Full Council
30 July 2024
Part i**

Draft Council Strategy

Purpose of Report

To agree the draft Council Strategy for public consultation

Recommendation(s)

The Council RESOLVES to:

1. Approve the draft Council Strategy (the 'One Teignbridge Strategy')
2. Publish the One Teignbridge Strategy for a minimum 6-week period of public consultation.

Financial Implications

These are as set out in section 4.1.

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Legal Implications

These are as set out in section 4.2.

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Risk Assessment

These are as set out in section 4.3.

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Environmental/ Climate Change Implications

These are as set out in section 4.4.

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Appendices

1. Our One Teignbridge Story
2. One Teignbridge Draft Strategy
3. Equalities Impact Assessment

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1.** The purpose of this report is to explain the content of the draft One Teignbridge Council Strategy and seek approval to publish it for a minimum 6-week period of public consultation.

2. REPORT DETAIL

2.1. Overview

- 2.1.1.** The One Teignbridge project was launched to the public on the 16th February 2024, to initiate the start of the new council strategy journey. This was followed by a wide-ranging consultation with residents, community leaders, voluntary groups and societies, businesses, and partners to hear about experiences of living and working in Teignbridge.
- 2.1.2.** Thousands of opinions and lived experiences were recorded and analysed alongside information and data about the district. These highlighted five key priority areas for our residents where the Council can have the biggest impact towards a positive future for Teignbridge.
- 2.1.3.** Alongside the five key priority areas are a set of principles that will guide the way we will work. These are based on the feedback we received around what our community expects from the Council.
- 2.1.4.** The draft strategy will be supported by an Action Plan that will set out the projects and services that we will deliver. This Action Plan will be fully developed following consultation of the draft strategy.

2.2. Background and Governance

- 2.2.1.** On 12 September 2023, Full Council agreed to start preparing a new Council Strategy and approved a budget, timetable, and scope for its preparation. This included setting up a Member and Officer Working Group to oversee preparation of the Strategy.

3. DEVELOPING THE DRAFT STRATEGY

3.1. Governance

3.1.1. At an early stage of preparation, the Working Group agreed on a title of “One Teignbridge” to signify the importance of the project bringing together all our communities to identify common aims. The Working Group had three key ambitions:

- There would be meaningful and holistic engagement to ensure that we put in place the right priorities and objectives to meet the needs of our district.
- That the strategy would be easy to read and understandable, in an accessible format.
- That the strategy would incorporate the principles of becoming a ‘community powered council’.

3.1.2. It is proposed that the period covered by the Strategy is 5 years and will therefore cover the period from 2024-2029. This enables us to plan to achieve longer term ambitions but equally react to changing needs and opportunities. Once we have finished consultation on the draft Strategy, we will develop an Action Plan of projects that support delivery of the Strategy, as well as an effective framework for monitoring and scrutiny. This will hold the Council to account and focus resources where they are most needed. Both the Action Plan and final One Teignbridge Strategy will be brought back to Full Council for approval and adoption later this year.

3.2. Who we have consulted

3.2.1. The original project plan proposed a two-stage consultation process. The first stage would be designed to find out about our communities’ issues to develop the draft strategy, and the second stage would be to share the draft to see if it was more widely supported. This report provides feedback on Stage 1 of the consultation process and seeks approval to progress to Stage 2.

3.2.2. For the first stage of consultation we carried out an extensive programme of engagement with residents and stakeholders. This involved the following groups and activities:

- Conference with representatives from Town and Parish Councils
- Meetings with Community Leaders from VCSE organisations
- Meeting with Dartmoor National Park Authority
- Meeting with Devon County Council
- A programme of youth engagement, including both secondary and primary school age pupils.
- Staff workshops
- Ten residents' workshops across the district.
- Communities engaged on our behalf by TeignCVS, including adults with learning difficulties, users of food banks, attendees of a long-term pain support group, an advocacy group for mixed-heritage families and from older residents at coffee mornings and lunch clubs.
- A business survey which asked questions about current issues faced and business aspirations over the next few years.

3.2.3. Alongside community engagement we also conducted a desktop review of available data, including information from the census, ONS, a recent survey conducted by the Customer Services team, and usage data from departments across the council to see how opinions and perceptions lined up with available data.

3.2.4. From this engagement activity we have brought together over 3,500 evidence points and statements.

3.2.5. The feedback and data we have received is summarised in Appendix 1 – Our One Teignbridge Story.

3.3. The proposed strategy

3.3.1. From the extensive data we have collected we are proposing five key themes for council priorities going forward: Community, Economy, Environment, Homes, and Infrastructure. These will all be underpinned by 'The Way We Will Work' - a statement of principles on the way we will operate as an organisation.

3.3.2. The Strategy is presented on a 2-page infographic as follows:

- Page 1: The Way We Will Work principles; headline priorities; mission statements.
- Page 2: supporting objectives for each of the headline priorities.

3.3.3. The draft One Teignbridge Strategy is included in Appendix 2.

3.4. Proposed consultation

3.4.1. For the second stage of public engagement, we propose to run a minimum 6-week consultation period during August and September. Although this falls partially during the school summer holidays, there are many scheduled community events already taking place which provide opportunities for us to attend and share the strategy with the wider community.

3.4.2. We will follow-up our conversations with those who were involved at Stage 1, including open events for Town and Parish councils, Community Leaders, and representatives from VCSE organisations, alongside liaison with members of the business community.

3.4.3. We will encourage feedback from all members of the public through multi-channel digital communications with short, accessible online surveys, and the use of new consultation software.

4. Implications, Risk Management and Climate Change Impact

4.1. Financial

4.1.1. The Council's ability to deliver services is affected by the availability of finance. It is therefore essential that the Council has a positive strategy to manage income and expenditure, making prudent decisions about how services will be run in the future.

4.1.2. The draft Strategy has streamlined the Council's previous 'Teignbridge Ten' strategy into a set of five clearly defined priorities and supporting objectives.

It is intended that these will be used to focus spending for statutory services, discretionary projects, and voluntary sector funding through the development of a more detailed and dynamic Action Plan that will be developed following consultation on the draft strategy. The Action Plan will be aligned to the Medium-Term Financial Plan to ensure that we can be a financially sustainable Council.

4.1.3. It is important to note that whilst the draft Strategy sets out clear intentions of the Council as to what we would like to achieve, there may be a need for projects and services to focus resources primarily on statutory services given the Council's current financial pressures. This may mean that other priorities may not be able to be resourced or may take time to bring forward.

Nevertheless, during our discussions with the community, it was evident that there was widespread understanding of the financial constraints of Councils, and in this context most were keen to see basic Council services done well as their main priority.

4.1.4. A budget of £80,000 was previously approved for preparation of the Council Strategy. There are sufficient funds remaining within this budget for carrying out the consultation and for completion of the project. There is therefore no request for any further funding associated with this report.

4.2. **Legal**

4.2.1. There are no legal requirements to prepare a Council Strategy, but it is a cornerstone of good governance, and its preparation helps to establish the framework for ensuring that the Council can be financially sustainable in delivering its statutory duties alongside any other discretionary services.

4.3. **Risks**

4.3.1. The Council Strategy provides the framework in which Council services and projects are prioritised and delivered. An updated and fit-for-purpose Council Strategy (and supporting performance monitoring framework) enables the Council to be accountable for its decisions around funding, resources, and

work programmes, and maximises opportunities to bring the greatest benefits to the communities it serves.

4.3.2. Communities were asked about any issues or things that they would like to see changed in the district. We have looked at all of these and are recommending the objectives as set out because these are the ones which have the greatest impact on people's quality of life. By its nature this will mean that there are some things people have said that are not reflected within the strategy.

4.4. Environmental/Climate Change Impact

4.4.1. There are key commitments within the draft Strategy to respond to the challenges of climate change, reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the district and look after our green spaces, beaches, and coastal areas. As one of the key pillars of the Strategy, this will ensure that environmental and climate change considerations are front and centre of all Council decisions relating to the services we provide and the projects we deliver.

5. CONSIDERATION OF ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

5.1. The alternative options to the proposed recommendation are:

- **Amend the proposed priorities and objectives prior to consultation.** The draft strategy has been developed from a wide body of evidence and community feedback which has been carefully reviewed and balanced. It has also been developed, checked, and agreed with the Council Strategy Member Working Group, the Staff Working Group and through a workshop with senior officers and district councillors and no alternative priorities or objectives were put forward. If alternatives are suggested they need to be put forward in the context of the evidence and feedback, or supported by evidence of where it is a clear community priority. *It is therefore recommended that the content of the draft Strategy is not amended prior to consultation as it is an accurate reflection of the feedback we have received to date.*

- **Not approve the draft for consultation and take additional time to prepare the draft strategy for consultation.** If Members are not content with the draft Strategy there is the option to pause work and carry out further first stage engagement. As with the first option, any decision to pause should be supported by evidence that the work to date has not been sufficiently comprehensive to be reflective of the needs and communities across the District. *It is therefore recommended that further time is not needed to prepare the draft strategy for consultation.*
- **Cease production of the Council Strategy.** The Council Strategy is hugely important in understanding and articulating the priorities of our communities' and was a key recommendation of the recent Peer Review. Once in place, it will be used as the framework for focusing our resources and projects and services so that we continue to meet our communities' needs whilst being financially sustainable. In its absence, there is a lack of clarity both internally and externally as to what we are seeking to achieve. Any decision to cease production would have significant reputational harm with the communities and partners who gave their time to engage with and input into the work to date, and who would have an expectation that the Council would develop a Strategy based on this work. *It is therefore recommended that work on the production of the Council Strategy continues.*

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1. Given the lack of focused Strategy for the Council currently and the need to ensure financial sustainability for the Council, it is recommended that this draft is approved for consultation to allow the project to progress expediently, with a view to having the final Strategy in place by autumn 2024.
- 6.2. The draft One Teignbridge Strategy is based on extensive data from focused discussions with around 250 individuals and the organisations they represent. The priorities and objectives reflect the issues raised in these discussions

and have been developed in consultation with staff, the Working Group, and wider Members of the Council. The consultation will enable these to be explored further with our communities through the engagement and events set out in section 3.4 which will help us to know whether we've got them right, and what we might want to change. On this basis it is recommended that the draft Strategy is approved for consultation.