

# Cabinet



Forest Heath  
District Council

<b>Title of Report:</b>	<b>West Suffolk Strategic Plan and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2016-2020</b>	
<b>Report No:</b>	<b>CAB/FH/15/038</b>	
<b>Report to and dates:</b>	<b>Cabinet</b>	1 September 2015
	<b>Council</b>	16 September 2015
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	<b>Purpose of report:</b>	To consider the draft West Suffolk Strategic Plan 2016-2020 and the draft West Suffolk Medium Term Financial Strategy 2016-2020 and recommend to Council for adoption.
<b>Recommendation:</b>	<b>Cabinet recommends to Council, for adoption, subject to updates and amendments by the Leaders as detailed in paragraphs 13 and 14, the;</b> <b>(1) West Suffolk Strategic Plan 2016-2020; and</b> <b>(2) West Suffolk Medium Term Financial Strategy 2016-2020.</b>	

<p><b>Key Decision:</b></p> <p><i>(Check the appropriate box and delete all those that <b>do not</b> apply.)</i></p>	<p><i>Is this a Key Decision and, if so, under which definition?</i></p> <p>Yes, it is a Key Decision - <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>No, it is not a Key Decision - <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
<p><i>The decisions made as a result of this report will usually be published within <b>48 hours</b> and cannot be actioned until <b>five clear working days of the publication of the decision</b> have elapsed. This item is included on the Decisions Plan.</i></p>	
<p><b>Consultation:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public consultation exercises were carried out by both councils in 2011 on the draft Corporate and Strategic plans for 2012-16 and on the councils' budgets.</li> <li>• A further public consultation exercise was carried out over the summer of 2014 in order to inform the budget setting process and help councillors to make decisions about the 2015/16 and 2016/17 budget. The purpose of the consultation was to gauge public opinion on the main savings/income generating options and to test views on a range of issues relating to the council priorities and themes in the MTFs, such as channel shift, families and communities and our commercial approach.</li> <li>• Councillor engagement with the draft Strategic Plan 2016-2020 and the draft Medium Term Financial Strategy was undertaken with councillors through at the Finance Briefings on 27 and 29 July 2015.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Alternative option(s):</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The alternative option is to not have a Medium Term Financial Strategy or Strategic Plan; however it is considered that these documents and the direction provided within them are essential to the effective running of an efficient council. The Councils' external and internal auditors consider the Medium Term Financial Strategy to be a key element of the arrangements necessary to ensure effective financial governance.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Implications:</b></p>	
<p><i>Are there any <b>financial</b> implications? If yes, please give details</i></p>	<p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Strategic Plan for 2016-2020 will shape the allocations made in the Medium Term financial Strategies (MTFS) for this period. As in previous years, the MTFS for 2016-2020 will make some reasonable assumptions about the likely future financial context for the councils and seek to identify areas where future pressures will be addressed.</li> <li>• The interaction between the Strategic Plan and MTFS will be particularly important in the setting of budgets for 2016-2020, as the</li> </ul>

	councils' priorities will be used to inform real choices about the allocation of resources.		
Are there any <b>staffing</b> implications? If yes, please give details	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Are there any <b>ICT</b> implications? If yes, please give details	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Are there any <b>legal and/or policy</b> implications? If yes, please give details	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Councils are not required to have a strategic plan. However by communicating our vision and priorities we can be clear as councils as to what we are looking to achieve over the period 2016-2020. The Strategic Plan then provides the direction for our policy and strategy development as well as driving our business plans and our performance management framework through the balanced scorecard work.</li> <li>The Medium Term Financial Strategy will provide the framework for financial decision making over the period 2016-2020.</li> </ul>		
Are there any <b>equality</b> implications? If yes, please give details	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Strategic Plan also incorporates our Equalities Objectives which all authorities are required to have under the Equality Act 2010 and the public sector equality duty.</li> </ul>		
<b>Risk/opportunity assessment:</b>			
<i>(potential hazards or opportunities affecting corporate, service or project objectives)</i>			
<b>Risk area</b>	<b>Inherent level of risk</b> (before controls)	<b>Controls</b>	<b>Residual risk</b> (after controls)
	Low/Medium/ High*		Low/Medium/ High*
Lack of funding to support full set of projects listed in the West Suffolk Strategic Plan	Medium	Approval of the West Suffolk MTFS to ensure resources are available to deliver projects and therefore strategic priorities. Ensure business planning process in place to fully assess value for money of detailed proposals	Low

Future changes in the wider economic environment affect the delivery of economic development and housing objectives	Medium	Ongoing monitoring of local economic conditions. Wider changes in model of service delivery to allow prioritisation of economic and housing priorities	Low
Unable to meet public's expectations of what the councils will deliver	Medium	Effective communications to educate residents about new ways of working	Low
<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>		All	
<b>Background papers:</b> <i>(all background papers are to be published on the website and a link included)</i>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FHDC Performance and Audit Committee: 26 November 2014 (<i>Delivering a Sustainable Budget 2015/2016 and Budget Consultation Results - <a href="#">PAS/FH/14/008</a> &amp; <a href="#">Appendix A</a> &amp; <a href="#">Appendix B</a></i>)</li> <li>SEBC Performance and Audit Committee: 26 November 2014 (<i>Delivering a Sustainable Budget 2015/2016 and Budget Consultation Results - <a href="#">PAS/SE/14/010</a> &amp; <a href="#">Appendix A</a> &amp; <a href="#">Appendix B</a></i>)</li> <li>Extraordinary FHDC Overview and Scrutiny Committee: 5 February 2014 (<i>Revised Draft West Suffolk Strategic Plan 2014-2016 and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2014-2016 - <a href="#">OAS14/449</a> &amp; <a href="#">Appendix A</a> &amp; <a href="#">Appendix B</a> &amp; <a href="#">Appendix C</a></i>)</li> </ul>	
<b>Documents attached:</b>		<i>(Please list any appendices.)</i> Appendix A – Strategic Plan 2016-2020 Appendix B - Medium Term Financial Strategy 2016-2020	

## **1. Key issues and reasons for recommendation(s)**

### **Background**

1. In 2013/2014 Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury Councils agreed to develop a West Suffolk Strategic Plan 2014-16. The Strategic Plan was a revision of the previous St Edmundsbury and Forest Heath council plans and took account of changes in economic climate, the direction of local government and our own shared services journey.
2. The development of the vision and priorities were developed based on a review of the two council's priorities set against evidence around the issues the two councils were facing. Consultation on the proposed vision and priorities was undertaken with ward members through meetings and staff through staff briefings. The draft Strategic Plan was also considered by St Edmundsbury and Forest Heath's Overview and Scrutiny committees who met together in two informal sessions to review the document.
3. Alongside the development of the vision and priorities, a range of projects and actions were identified drawing on existing plans and the views of members to determine the areas of focus within the Strategic Plan.
4. In February 2014 the West Suffolk Strategic Plan 2014-16 was adopted by Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury. The Strategic Plan centred on the following three priorities:
  - Priority 1: Increased opportunities for economic growth
  - Priority 2: Resilient families and communities that are healthy and active
  - Priority 3: Homes for our communities
5. During the last 18 months the councils have been working to deliver these priorities and embedding them into our culture. We have also been working to ensure links between the West Suffolk Strategic Plan and our financial framework in particular the Medium Term Financial Strategy.
6. In order to strengthen those links and ensure that our spending plans, resource commitments and our delivery plans are intrinsically connected we have linked the development of the revised West Suffolk Strategic Plan with the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).

### **West Suffolk Strategic Plan and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2016-2020**

7. When considering the development of the draft West Suffolk Strategic Plan 2016-2020 and the draft MTFS 2016-2020, it was felt that there had not been significant changes in the local economic or social context that would warrant a fundamental revisiting of the priorities and themes set out in the two documents.
8. Therefore the draft West Suffolk Strategic Plan 2016-2020 is still centred on the following three priorities:
  - Priority 1: Increased opportunities for economic growth
  - Priority 2: Resilient families and communities that are healthy and active
  - Priority 3: Homes for our communities

9. The draft West Suffolk Medium Term Financial Strategy 2016-2020 remains based around the following six themes:
  1. Aligning resources to both councils' new strategic plan and essential services;
  2. Continuation of the shared service agenda and transformation of service delivery;
  3. Behaving more commercially;
  4. Considering new funding models (e.g. acting as an investor);
  5. Encouraging the use of digital forms for customer access; and
  6. Taking advantage of new forms of local government finance (e.g. business rate retention).
10. These drafts have been developed and updated through a "light touch" review focusing on updating the projects and actions within the existing frameworks and making minor changes to reflect developments in legislation or local government financing arrangements. Councillor engagement with the draft West Suffolk Strategic Plan 2016-2020 and the draft MTFS was undertaken with councillors through at the Member Finance Briefings on 27 and 29 July 2015.

### **Amendments to the drafts**

11. Councillors are invited to recommend the draft Strategic Plan and the draft MTFS for approval by Council on 16 September (FHDC) and 22 September (SEBC) in order to ensure that the draft MTFS document is able to accompany the 2016/17 budget documents through the democratic process from late 2015.
12. The current 2016/17 budget process will inform the financial summary section within the MTFS and will focus on the numbers and overall budget assumptions, for presentation to both Councils' Cabinets and then full Councils in February 2016.
13. The attached draft of the West Suffolk Strategic Plan and MTFS 2016-2020 have a number of areas which need to be updated or included in order to ensure that it is as up-to-date as possible when it comes into effect from 1 April 2016 (these are detailed in the attachments). In particular there will need to be an update on the developments around devolution following the discussions we are due to start with Government in September 2015. Councillors are invited to delegate authority to the Leaders to update these sections of the documents; any significant changes would be brought back to Councillors for approval as appropriate.
14. There will also need to be updates on the key projects highlighted in the West Suffolk Strategic Plan document such as the Eastern Relief Road, Mildenhall Hub and other master planning projects. Again Councillors are invited to delegate authority to the Leaders to make minor drafting changes and update the sections highlighted within the document as "to be added" or "include case studies on" before publication on 1 April 2016.

### **Publication**

15. Key partners and stakeholders would be advised of the publication via email and press release and the availability of the document on the website however paper copies would not be produced to minimise costs.