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**Agenda Item:** Adoption of the Corporate Strategic Plan 2025–2029

**Meeting Date:** Monday 15 December 2025

**Contact Officer:** Town Clerk/CEO

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The purpose of this report is to present Members with the Final Draft Corporate Strategic Plan 2025–2029 for consideration and formal adoption by Full Council. The Strategic Plan sets out the Council’s corporate vision, priorities and delivery framework for the next five years and will act as the overarching strategic document guiding policy development, service delivery, financial planning and partnership working.

Members are also asked to note that a detailed Action Plan, setting out individual actions, projects, lead committees, timescales and performance measures, will be drafted once the Corporate Strategic Plan is adopted. The phasing and final delivery of elements within that Action Plan will be subject to the final outturn of the 2026/27 budget and the Council’s Medium Term Financial Strategy.

### **Background**

The Council’s previous strategic direction has been guided by a range of adopted policy documents and service strategies, including the Open Spaces Strategy (2021), Communications Strategy, Community Engagement Strategy, Investment and Medium Term Financial Strategy along with annual business and service plans. While these documents have provided clear direction in specific service areas, Members identified the need for a refreshed, single Corporate Strategic Plan to draw these strands together into one coherent corporate framework.

### **Development of the 2025–2029 Corporate Strategic Plan**

Work on a new Corporate Strategic Plan commenced following Member discussions during the 2024/25 municipal year. The intention was to establish a clear and forward-looking corporate framework that:

- Reflects the Council’s long-term ambitions for the town;
- Aligns service delivery, asset management, investment and financial planning;
- Provides a clear strategic context for Committee decision-making; and
- Strengthens transparency and accountability to residents.

The Final Draft Plan has been shaped through Committee meetings, data from the annual residents’ surveys, officer input, alignment with existing strategies and engagement with key

partners where appropriate. It has also been developed in the context of significant external change, including:

- Local government reorganisation proposals;
- Community governance review considerations;
- The emerging West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041; and
- The Council's Climate and Biodiversity Emergency commitments.

## **Current Situation**

### **1. Status of the Corporate Strategic Plan**

Members are presented with the Final Draft Corporate Strategic Plan 2025–2029 for adoption. The Plan sets out:

- The Council's Vision and Mission;
- Seven Strategic Priority Themes - Pillars:
  1. A Forward-Looking Town Council
  2. An Engaged and Supported Community
  3. An Empowered Community
  4. A Respectful and Inclusive Community
  5. A Beautiful Witney
  6. A Vibrant Local Economy
  7. A Green and Resilient Town
- The Council's governance and committee framework for delivery;
- Strategic alignment with district-level planning and infrastructure policy;
- A clear commitment to annual review and post-election refresh in 2027.

The document is currently text-heavy by design to clearly establish the Council's strategic intent, governance framework and delivery principles. Once adopted, the Plan will undergo some design elements to make it more appealing to read and published as a public-facing document, incorporating photography, illustration and examples of Witney Town Council's public realm, services and community assets.

### **2. Action Plan**

Once adopted a detailed Action Plan will be drawn up as a supporting appendix.

This will:

- Translate the Strategic Priorities into specific actions and projects;
- Identify the lead Committee(s) and officers for each action;
- Set indicative timescales and delivery phases;
- Identify performance measures and reporting arrangements.

The Action Plan will be a live working document, subject to annual review alongside the Strategic Plan itself. Some projects and actions will be contingent upon budget availability and the outcome of the 2026/27 budget process and Medium Term Financial Strategy.

### **3. Relationship to Budget & Financial Planning**

The Strategic Plan provides the corporate framework within which the Council's annual budgets and medium-term financial planning will be developed. While many priorities reflect existing service commitments and approved capital projects, some elements of the Action Plan will be dependent upon:

- The final 2025/26 outturn;
- The financial position entering the 2026/27 budget cycle;
- External funding opportunities (grants, S106 and Community Infrastructure Levy);
- Future investment returns.

Adoption of the Strategic Plan does not itself authorise expenditure; rather, it establishes the policy and strategic basis against which future financial decisions will be tested.

### **Impact Assessments**

The Town Council has a duty to consider the effects of its decisions, functions and activities on equality, biodiversity, and crime & disorder. Consideration should also be given to effects on the environment, given the Council's Climate Emergency declaration in 2019.

**Equality:** The Corporate Strategic Plan embeds a strong commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion, with a dedicated strategic priority focused on building a respectful and inclusive community. The themes within the Plan support equality of access to services, facilities, decision-making and community life across all protected characteristics.

**Biodiversity & Environment:** The Strategic Plan reinforces the Council's Climate and Biodiversity Emergency commitments, with a clear objective to achieve net zero carbon in Council operations by 2028 and to embed environmental responsibility across all service areas, asset management and procurement.

**Crime & Disorder:** The Plan places strong emphasis on community engagement, youth provision, public realm quality and community facilities, all of which contribute positively to community safety, wellbeing and the reduction of antisocial behaviour.

### **Risk**

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

- Financial risk if ambitions exceed available resources;
- Delivery risk if actions are not effectively prioritised through the Action Plan;
- Reputational risk if expectations are not managed through realistic timescales;
- External risk arising from local government reorganisation and planning reform.

These risks will be managed through phased delivery, annual review, robust financial governance and ongoing Member oversight.

## **Social Value**

Social value is the positive change the Council creates in the local community within which it operates.

- Investment in parks, play, culture and community assets;
- Support for voluntary and community sector partners;
- Promotion of health, wellbeing and inclusion;
- Environmental enhancement and climate action;
- Strengthening democratic engagement and representation.

## **Financial implications**

The Corporate Strategic Plan itself does not create a direct financial commitment. Financial implications will arise through the delivery of individual projects and actions contained within the accompanying Action Plan. These will be considered through:

- The annual budget-setting process;
- The Medium Term Financial Strategy;
- The capital programme;
- External funding bids and developer contributions.

Members are specifically asked to note that elements of the Action Plan will be subject to the final outturn of the 2026/27 budget and future financial capacity.

## **Recommendations**

Members are invited to note the report and

1. Consider and adopt the Final Draft Corporate Strategic Plan 2025–2029 as the Council’s primary corporate policy framework.
2. Note that the supporting Action Plan will be to be drafted once the Corporate Strategic Plan is adopted and will be subject to annual review and budget approval.
3. Agree that, following adoption, the Strategic Plan will undergo design and published in a public-facing illustrated format.
4. Agree that the Strategic Plan will be reviewed annually, with a comprehensive refresh following the May 2027 Town Council elections.