

Report To: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 13 January 2015

Lead Member / Officer: Councillor Hugh Evans & Councillor Huw L Jones

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Title: Town and Area Plans

1. What is the report about?

This report presents the actions taken since the Review of Town & Area Plans and outlines the way forward.

2. What is the reason for making this report?

A review of Town & Area Plans was completed in June 2014. This report outlines what action has been taken in response to the review, recommends some actions and provides Cabinet with an update on the current financial position for Town & Area Plans.

3. What are the recommendations?

The recommendations for Cabinet are to:

1. Approve the Town and Area Plans Policy Statement;
2. Endorse the Town & Area Plans Champions Group's assessment of projects formally approved by Cabinet but not yet started;
3. De-commit the funding allocation to those projects assessed as not meeting the criteria; and
4. Endorse the preparation of revised list of Town and Area Plan priority projects and the proposed process for allocating funding to these projects.

4. Report details

4.1 Town & Area Plans Policy Statement

In February and March 2014, Cabinet approved the last batch of expanded Town and Area Plans. Concerns were raised about the delivery and funding of the Plans and Cabinet agreed that a review should be conducted. The review was completed in June 2014.

The review concluded that while the concept of using Town and Area Plans to bring the Council 'closer to the community' was sound and allowed the Council to gain an understanding of priorities at local level, there was a lack of clarity around the overarching policy intentions of the Town and Area Plans and a lack of consistency in how they had been developed and were being delivered. To clarify the policy intentions a Policy Statement has been produced which sets out the core policy objectives, along with accompanying key principles. This Policy Statement is attached as Appendix 1 and the recommendation to Cabinet is that they approve this document.

4.2 Assessment of existing Town & Area Plan projects with allocated funding

The Review also concluded that Town & Area Plans as currently written are not sufficiently strategic, do not provide clear information on anticipated benefits and are not clear how impact will be measured. To address this, a review of Town & Area Plan projects that had been agreed for funding by Cabinet was undertaken which identified that:

- 36 projects had been either completed or were in progress;
- A further 18 projects had yet to start; and
- Some local Members had aspirations for additional projects to be allocated funding.

Details of the projects in each category are shown in Appendix 2.

At its meeting on 23rd September 2014, the Town & Area Plans Champions Group agreed to undertake a reassessment of those projects that had been allocated funding but not yet started. A set of assessment criteria and associated scoring matrix was developed, and this is attached as Appendix 3. A special Town Plan Champions Assessment Workshop was held on 17th October 2014 where the criteria were applied to each relevant project. The results of the workshop were:

- 4 projects were assessed as having already started and were recommended to continue;
- 7 projects were assessed as satisfactorily meeting the assessment criteria and were recommended to proceed;
- 5 projects were assessed as not meeting the assessment criteria and were recommended not to proceed; and
- 2 projects were withdrawn

The full results are attached at Appendix 4, and the recommendation to Cabinet is that they validate this assessment.

The cumulative value of the 5 projects assessed as not meeting the criteria and the 2 withdrawn projects is £175,000. In addition and as noted at the end of Appendix 4, one project with an allocation of £40,000 which was recommended to proceed following the workshop on 17 October 2014 has been unsuccessful in its grant application. This gives a total de-commitment of £215,000. The recommendation to Cabinet is that they approve this de-commitment and this sum is added to the existing unallocated balance for Town & Area Plans.

4.3 – Funding position

The table below outlines the current financial position of the Town & Area Plan budget and the impact of the proposed de-commitments on the unallocated balance.

Table 1: Current budget against Town Plan Budget

Total funding budget for Town and Area Plans to 31 Mar 2015	£1,939,000
Allocations to 1 November 2014	£1,332,170
Unallocated balance to 1 November 2014	£606,830
Proposed de-commitments	£215,000
Allocations following de-commitments	£1,117,170
Unallocated balance following de-commitments	£821,830

Of the £1,117,170 allocated budget, £348,887 has been spent as of 1 November 2014.

4.4 –Future allocations

With regard to the unallocated balance, work has begun on working with the Town Plan Champions and MAG's to confirm projects to be progressed between now and the end of council term (March 2017 or 18 depending on merger). The proposed process for progressing this is:

1. examine the existing Town & Area Plans to consider which projects within those plans might be considered for funding;
2. consider if there are any "new" projects that are not currently detailed in the plans (recognising that work on some plans began as much as 3 years ago and that the environments and opportunities may have changed in that time);
3. the combined list from the two actions above will be considered by the respective MAG's for their endorsement;
4. Once endorsed by the MAG's all potential projects will be presented to the Town Plan Champions Group and subjected to the same assessment criteria and process as detailed in section 4.2 of this report;
5. The list of new priority projects will be presented to a future Cabinet meeting for consideration and approval of funding.

The Town Plan Champions Group will also be expected to ensure that there is a reasonable geographic spread in terms of funding allocation. Cabinet is recommended to endorse this proposed approach to preparing a revised list of Town & Area Plan priority projects and to the proposed process for allocating funding to these projects.

5. How does the decision contribute to the Corporate Priorities?

Denbighshire County Council has long held an objective to be a high performing Council, close to its communities. Closer to the Community is identified as an overarching aspiration in the Council's Corporate Plan. In a review of the Closer to the Community objective in 2013, Town & Area Plans were identified as one of the components for taking forward the Closer to the Community objective, with a focus on mapping local community needs and aspirations, and building community capacity.

The Corporate Plan 2012/17 sets out an ambitious agenda for change across a range of priority areas. Developing the Local Economy is identified as one of these priorities. Vibrant towns and communities are seen as an important element of a healthy local economy.

In 2011, Denbighshire County Council together with its key partners developed the first Big Plan for Denbighshire. The Big Plan set out a long term vision for Denbighshire and identified a comprehensive set of actions to address elements of that vision. The Big Plan has been reviewed and a new more focused Wellbeing Plan is now emerging. The new Plan focuses on supporting people and communities to become more independent and resilient, and developing the right environment in which people can maintain their individual and community wellbeing.

Town and Area Plans have an important contribution to make to these 3 policy objectives, and are therefore considered to be important mechanisms for:

- **Bringing the Council Closer to its Communities**
- **Building Vibrant Towns & Communities**
- **Supporting the Development of Independent & Resilient Communities**

6. What will it cost and how will it affect other services?

The current funding position is detailed in section 4.3, but the table below details how this breaks down at a local level, along with details of the potential match funding. The table below has assumed that the financial de-commitments detailed in this report have been approved.

Table 2: Spend to Date and Match Funding

Town:	Town Plan Allocated to date	Town Plan Spent to date	Town Plan Balance	Match Funding to date	Match Funding Forecast	Total Match Funding
Prestatyn	£245,000	£21,695	£223,305	£0	£7,000	£7,000
St Asaph	£77,800	£58,420	£19,380	£0	£283,500	£283,500
Rhuddlan	£34,000	£16,925	£17,075	£700	£21,300	£22,000
Denbigh	£137,800	£67,933	£69,867	£0	£561,200	£561,200
Ruthin	£169,070	£74,920	£94,150	£41,420	£187,000	£228,420
Corwen	£55,000	£54,001	£999	£18,426	£52,500	£70,926
Llangollen	£98,500	£50,743	£47,757	£3,000	£501,000	£504,000
Rhyl	£300,000	£4,250	£295,750	£0	£200,000	£200,000
Bodelwyddan	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
TOTAL	£1,117,170	£348,887	£768,283	£63,546	£1,813,500	£1,877,046

Whilst the table above details the financial position in relation to the dedicated Town & Area Plan budget, the plans should also be a key document in influencing the activity and priorities of all Denbighshire Services.

7. What are the main conclusions of the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) undertaken on the decision What consultations have been carried out?

Individual Equality Impact Assessments for specific projects or activities detailed within the Town and Area Plans will be developed at the appropriate stage.

8. What consultations have been carried out?

Town and Area Plans are developed in partnership with the relevant Town or Community Council. Consultation has been undertaken with DCC Heads of Service, third sector organisations (through DVSC), residents and business community (through some face to face meetings and through web based surveys).

9. Chief Finance Officer Statement

The expenditure proposed is contained within existing funding allocations. No capital project should start without a proper appraisal and any revenue implications from projects should be contained within existing budgets.

10. What risks are there and is there anything we can do to reduce them?

There is a risk that the development of the plans will raise expectations and that failure to deliver could damage the Council's reputation with Town and Community Councils and other stakeholders. This will be managed by ongoing involvement and communication with relevant stakeholders about the development and delivery of the plans.

11. Power to make the Decision

Section 2 Local Government Act 2000

Section 111 Local Government Act 1972