

15 January 2015

9. KEY ISSUES DEBATE – "WORCESTERSHIRE NEXT GENERATION"

Background

1. The Council's Constitution allows for the Council to hold key issues debates. These are intended to allow Councillors to have a wide-ranging discussion (without necessarily the constraints associated with formal proceedings of the Council) on a specific issue of interest particularly in circumstances where policy or practice has yet to be determined. This Key Issues debate will focus on the document "Worcestershire Next Generation – Facing Our Future. Together".

2. To facilitate this debate the Worcestershire Partnership Relationship Manager has prepared this report and enclosed a copy of the Worcestershire Next Generation document (which is also available with the agenda papers on the Council's website).

3. A report which outlined some of the issues involved was presented to the Cabinet on 25 September 2014.

4. As with other Key Issues debates the Council will not take any decisions or vote on the matter under debate, but any key points which emerge from it will be used to inform the Cabinet's future consideration of the Corporate Plan. Any emerging views will also be used to inform the Council's response to partners involved with this initiative.

The Vision

5. The Cabinet on 25 September 2014 endorsed the Worcestershire Next Generation document which sets out a shared long-term strategic vision for the county. Leaders from Worcestershire's businesses, voluntary, community and public sector organisations have pledged to work together as part of this new vision aimed at creating a better future for Worcestershire.

6. Launched on 1 October 2013, Worcestershire Next Generation outlines 25 commitments which focus on three linked priorities; prosperity, community and environment, and are dedicated to preserving and enhancing the quality of life for local residents by 2040 and beyond. Worcestershire Next Generation seeks to stimulate cross-sector participation in shaping a prosperous, vibrant and inclusive county into the future on the basis that by

working together far more can be achieved than if things are done separately.

7. The county's environment is what makes Worcestershire a great place to live and work, but a number of challenges are faced. Unemployment is now at its lowest level since July 2008 but the county cannot afford to lose large employers and all the partners believe it is essential to do more to bring in new businesses and jobs, and better support smaller locally grown businesses too. There are growing pockets of deprivation with significant gaps in life expectancy in different parts of the county. Worcestershire also has an ageing population, alcohol and obesity related health concerns and environmental challenges such as flooding. These issues are compounded by an increasing demand for services with less money to pay for them.

8. The Cabinet has concurred that what is needed is the creation of stronger socially inclusive communities, where the voluntary and community sector will play an increasingly important role in safeguarding local standards of living and where people take more personal responsibility for their health and well-being.

9. Having established that change is needed and identified what needs to be done, Worcestershire Next Generation is now asking others how they can contribute to this shared vision and help improve the quality of life for those in generations to come. Worcestershire Next Generation can make a real difference to the people and communities of Worcestershire but to achieve this the Council will need it to be steering all its plans. There are several examples of where links already exist between Worcestershire Next Generation and the Council's Corporate Plan – FutureFit, these include:

- Open for Business contributes to and supports commitments (1) focus on jobs and (2) grow existing businesses
- Act Local in Worcestershire contributes to and supports commitments (9) enable stronger communities and (10) encourage the contribution of the individual
- The Future Lives Programme contributes to and supports commitments (15) encourage individuals to take more responsibility for their health and (16) actively develop opportunities for older people
- Children and Families contributes to and supports the overall vision for Worcestershire Next Generation in ensuring future generations benefit from the county's businesses, voluntary, community

and public sectors working together for a better future.

10. To continue supporting this shared vision the Cabinet suggests that any future reviews of the Corporate Plan will need to take into account the priorities within Worcestershire Next Generation.

11. Examples of other organisations that are already supporting or endorsing the initiative include:

- Festival Housing (now Fortis Living) used Worcestershire Next Generation as part of their wider environmental scanning when working on their 5-year strategic plan. This also influenced the priorities in the final document because it highlighted a need for a separate housing priority
- Wyre Forest District Council used the document to inform their medium-term financial strategy and revision of their corporate plan
- The Worcestershire LEP Strategic Economic Plan sets out how it will deliver the prosperous ambitions of Worcestershire Next Generation.

12. Section 4 of the Local Government Act 2000 requires local authorities to produce a sustainable community strategy that sets the overall strategic direction and long-term vision for the economic, social and environmental well-being of a local area. This duty is set to be repealed under a clause in the Deregulation Bill and Worcestershire Next Generation can be viewed as a natural successor to this strategy. Whilst the sustainable community strategy is still in existence it will run concurrently with Worcestershire Next Generation as the priorities within both documents are complementary of each other.

13. It is intended that the Worcestershire Next Generation priorities and commitments will be reviewed every four years with progress towards delivering them assessed on an annual basis. Worcestershire Next Generation is supported by a dedicated website (www.wearethenextgeneration.co.uk) and social media through which the conversation has started across communities and networks to communicate this exciting vision and bring it to life.

Key issues for debate

14. Members might want to consider the following questions for debate among others:

- Which commitments are most important to WCC and what do we need to change as a result?
- What change are we currently delivering that works towards delivering this vision in 2040?
- How does WCC embed Worcestershire Next Generation in its future planning?
- What role should officers have in delivering Worcestershire Next Generation through the change programme?
- How can WCC increase the profile of Worcestershire Next Generation and encourage others to adopt this shared vision?

Contact Points

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Specific Contact Points for this Report

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Chief Executive) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

- Agenda papers for the meeting of the Cabinet held on 25 September 2014