

Environment and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny

Date of Meeting: 20 January 2020

Report Title: Cheshire East Draft Economic Strategy

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Nick Mannion – Environment and Regeneration

Senior Officer: Frank Jordan – Executive Director - Place

1. Report Summary

- 1.1. A new Economic Strategy has been developed for the Borough. It is a five year plan outlining the main priorities that will support inclusive and sustainable growth across Cheshire East. It sets strategic objectives for the Council which will help to direct future spending, project prioritisation and funding bids.
- 1.2. At its meeting on 17th June 2019, this committee received a presentation which outlined the need for an Economic Strategy and summarised the draft Economic Strategy document. The strategy was generally well received and with consideration of a number of comments progressed to Council Cabinet on 9th July where it was approved to move forward to public consultation.
- 1.3. Public consultation is now complete and this report provides summary information on the comments received and further amendments and a final draft of the Economic Strategy which is returned back to this Committee for consideration as requested.

2. Recommendation/s

- 2.1. That the committee reviews the results of the public consultation; the final draft documents for the Economic Strategy in Appendices I, II and III; and recommends this final draft to the Portfolio Holder for final sign off.

3. Reasons for Recommendation/s

- 3.1. The draft Economic Strategy for Cheshire East 2020 – 2025 sets out an ambition for inclusive and sustainable growth and the key priorities for enabling the delivery of this. Once finalised and approved, the Economic Strategy will support the Council in:
 - 3.1.1. Articulating our offer and opportunity to Businesses, Partners and potential investors
 - 3.1.2. Framing our conversations with the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and Government Departments
 - 3.1.3. Informing any strategic bids submitted in the future for national programmes

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1. There is no statutory requirement for Local Authorities to produce an Economic Strategy. However, the need for an Economic Strategy has been demonstrated and public support for the priorities outlined in the Cheshire East Economic Strategy is high.

5. Background

- 5.1. During August and September 2019 Cheshire East Council consulted on its draft Economic Strategy for Cheshire East for 2019 – 2024. The strategy has been developed in partnership with representatives from the private sector and this consultation aimed to test the strategy with a wider community.
- 5.2. Respondents were invited to comment via a questionnaire prepared by the Council's Consultation Team which was designed to test the five priority themes and their twelve supporting strategic objectives set out within the strategy; ask if there are any elements of the economic strategy, strategic objectives or actions that responders are currently or could in the future, contribute to the delivery of; and gather information on any further key areas, strategic objectives or actions which have not been covered within the draft Economic Strategy.
- 5.3. The consultation was promoted on the Cheshire East Website, through social media channels (Twitter and Facebook) and also sent directly to members of the Cheshire East Council Digital Influence Panel and other relevant stakeholders. In total 211 consultation responses were received to the online consultation and a further 7 responses were made via e-mail/letter. Comments were also made on the promotional social media posts in

which there were 5,764 engagements (the number of unique people who for example commenting on, liked, shared or clicked upon particular elements of the post) on Facebook and 284 engagements on Twitter.

- 5.4. Agreement that the five priority themes are the right priorities to focus on within the draft Economic Strategy was high with 'making Cheshire East the place to live' receiving the highest agreement (85%, agreed either strongly or tend to) and 'making Cheshire East the place to connect' receiving the lowest (64% agreed, 24% neither agreed nor disagreed).
- 5.5. Each priority theme had their own strategic objectives and actions under them. Agreement with each of these was varied with the majority receiving over 50% agreement apart from 'capitalise on the growth opportunity of HS2' which received just fewer than 50% agreement (49% agreed, 35% disagreed).
- 5.6. A number of comments were received as part of the consultation. The key themes are summarised below:
 - 5.6.1. There was support for town centre regeneration (91% agreed with this objective) although within the comments there were some concerns over the pace of delivery of developments and the retention of local heritage.
 - 5.6.2. There seemed to be little support for increasing the quantum of new housing; but over half of respondents were in support of expanding the variety and tenure (55% agreed with this objective) with some commenting there was a need for more affordable housing and housing of better quality/design. Commenters also felt that there was a need for developments to be accompanied by adequate infrastructure, public transport, education (schools specifically mentioned) and health provision4% more productive than the UK average.
 - 5.6.3. General support for protecting and enhancing the rural environment (89% agreed with this objective) with some concerns that growth does not cause loss of the greenbelt/countryside, including the impact of HS2.
 - 5.6.4. A number of concerns that the strategy has too much reliance on HS2 and feelings that there should be a plan B however 49% of responders were supportive of the objective to capitalise on the opportunity of HS2 and the regeneration opportunities that it could bring.

- 5.6.5. There were general concerns throughout the consultation that there is not enough reference to green issues e.g. climate change, renewable energy, air pollution.
- 5.6.6. Large number of comments regarding improving local connectivity; roads (lack of maintenance on roads and pavements), public transport links and connectivity (northern & eastern parts of CE specifically) and digital connectivity (particularly in rural areas).
- 5.6.7. The objective to support residents to improve their skills levels was well received (86% agreed with this objective), but there were a few comments saying that actions could be clearer.
- 5.6.8. Comments were received on strengthening business support suggesting reducing business rates, car parking charges and support for start-up businesses.
- 5.6.9. Comments that Brexit is not referenced enough and will impact on growth.
- 5.6.10. Further comments were added on the order of the objectives; some that they should be set out in order of priority but others wanted them to be of equal priority.
- 5.7. The main message we have taken from the consultation was 'putting people at the heart' of our strategic thinking and this is something that we have reflected on in this latest draft of the Economic Strategy. We have focussed on key changes of emphasis that will help to further demonstrate how we are aiming to ensure that growth is both inclusive and sustainable across the Borough:
 - 5.7.1. Creating 'inclusive growth' not just growth – so that growth combines increased prosperity with greater equality; creates opportunities for all our residents; and distributes the benefits of increased prosperity fairly.
 - 5.7.2. Developing 'communities' not just housing – the quality of housing; its type, tenure and cost; and its location are of primary importance to ensure that everyone can participate in their community.
 - 5.7.3. Providing 'sustainable travel options' not just transport - thinking about integrated planning and transport, walking, cycling,

expanding public transit infrastructure and improving existing public transit services.

- 5.7.4. Promoting a 'sustainable approach' to growth – supporting delivery of the Council's Environmental Strategy through encouraging businesses, residents, visitors and organisations across Cheshire East to reduce their carbon footprint and to protect and enhance our natural environment.
- 5.8. In addition to the work taken to refocus the narrative of the Economic Strategy (Appendix I), the document has also been restructured so that the actions are now provided in a separate plan to assist with monitoring (Appendix II) and the data sheets, now including the business sector information, are also provided separately (Appendix III).

6. Implications of the Recommendations

6.1. Legal Implications

- 6.1.1. There is no statutory requirement to produce an Economic Strategy and there should not be any direct legal implications arising from its approval.

6.2. Finance Implications

- 6.2.1. There may be future benefits through gaining access to funding as a result of having a clearly defined economic strategy for the Borough.

6.3. Policy Implications

- 6.3.1. The Corporate Plan highlights how the Council is striving to create sustainable growth in the local economy. Cheshire East is now developing an Economic Strategy to support our economic growth ambition, setting out our growth proposition and key priorities for delivery.

6.4. Equality Implications

- 6.4.1. An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out.

6.5. Human Resources Implications

- 6.5.1. There are no Human Resource implications for this work.

6.6. Risk Management Implications

- 6.6.1. There are no direct risks associated with this strategic work as it is an opportunity to provide support for the Council's economic growth ambition and help to allocate resource and generate funding opportunities.

6.7. Rural Communities Implications

- 6.7.1. There are no direct implications from the Economic Strategy for rural communities although some of the themes and objectives may have a positive impact in the future. .

6.8. Implications for Children & Young People

- 6.8.1. There are no direct implications for children and young people.

6.9. Public Health Implications

- 6.9.1. There are no direct implications for public health.

7. Ward Members Affected

- 7.1. The Economic Strategy applies to the whole of the Borough therefore covers all wards within it. As such all member briefing and engagement sessions will be included as part of the consultation process.

8. Consultation & Engagement

- 8.1. The Economic Strategy has been developed in partnership with representatives from the private sector and has been published for public consultation for a period of 8 weeks seeking feed back from residents, businesses, public service partners and other non-government agencies.
- 8.1. Agreement that the five priority themes and twelve strategic objectives are the right priorities to focus on within the draft Economic Strategy was high as summarised in 5.6 above.

9. Access to Information

- 9.1. The Draft Economic Strategy has been informed by a suite of strategies at national, sub regional and local levels including the Industrial Strategy, Strategic Economic Plan and Local Industrial Strategy work being carried out by the LEP:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/664563/industrial-strategy-white-paper-web-ready-version.pdf

<http://www.871candwep.co.uk/strategic-economic-plan/>

<http://www.871candwep.co.uk/local-industrial-strategies/>

- 9.2. The strategy is also informed by ongoing borough profiling and performance monitoring and the set of economic data which sits behind it including the Economic Assessment and the Cheshire Business Survey:

https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/business/business_information/local_economic_assessment.aspx

https://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/business/business_information/cheshire-business-survey-2017.aspx

10. Contact Information

- 10.1. Any questions relating to this report should be directed to the following officer:

Name: Carol Young

Job Title: Place Team

Email: Carol.young@cheshireeast.gov.uk