

## Full Council

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<b>Report Title:</b>	<b>Strategy Project Working Group Update</b>
<b>Meeting Date:</b>	<b>8 August 2023</b>
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Mandy Sturdy</b>

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### Purpose of the Report

1. To receive an update following the initial strategic project working group (WG) meeting held on 26 July 2023. Attended by Cllrs, Dite, Gilbert, Cowell, Dawson and Dyer; and 3 officers.

### Action Required

2. To note the report and to approve the next steps in the project.

### Background

3. Refraining from looking at the detail of what should be in a strategic plan, the WG reviewed what the process to deliver a strategic plan for Thame could look like, including why a strategic plan was needed and why Thame Town Council is here.
4. There were concerns that the community may be confused about how a strategic plan for the Town differs from the neighbourhood plan, especially as TNP2<sup>1</sup> could be running in parallel to this project. For example, there are still many people within the community that are unclear on which areas the Town Council does and does not have authority or power over. It was agreed that without clearly setting out why we are asking them again to give their thoughts about the future of the Town, we could do harm to our reputation and result in poor or little feedback.
5. Whilst we do not wish to bias any responses to this project, it is important that we set questions which will result in the opinions of our stakeholder on subject which we can or could affect.
6. It was agreed to **recommend** to council that a communication project to better share why Thame Town Council is here and what it does should go before consulting with TTC's stakeholders about what they would like to see in a strategic plan.
7. Plans are already underway to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Thame Town Council in 2024. It is proposed that this anniversary is used as a vehicle to raise the profile of the council to highlight not only what it does do, but also what it has done in the past 50 years and what it could do in the future.

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<sup>1</sup> Thame Neighbourhood Plan 2

8. Far from pausing work on this project, the aspiration is to extend the deadline to the end of 2024 to allow greater planning time; The aim is to launch the consultations in Spring / Summer 2024 and look to receive feedback from at least 10% of Thame's population.
9. The working group recommends that the next step is to pool the vast experience, knowledge and ideas of our councillors and officers by holding a face-to-face meeting to agree the process for developing the strategic plan. The meeting would be facilitated by an external specialist with many years' experience in Local Government.

### **Risk Assessment**

10. It is important that the Council has an agreed strategy to ensure clarity regarding its direction to ensure effective use of the Precept.
11. Without clear consultation with Thame's community and the surrounding villages it will not be possible to understand their needs and aspirations.
12. The community could be frustrated if the difference (and links) between the strategy and the TNP2 are not clear.
13. The success of the strategic project is reliant on the input and support of all members and staff.

### **Resource Appraisal**

- Officers' time, including possible overtime (Time off in lieu) for weekend community consultations.
- Use of council facilities
- Use of council consumables, stationery, printing.
- Budget:
  - Initially up to £4,000 from general reserves

### **Recommendation**

#### **It is recommended that:**

- i) **The Council pool their knowledge and experience to raise the profile of the Town Council through a focused communication exercise linked to the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Council.**
- ii) **The Council supports holding a one-day strategy meeting on 10 November 2023 for all members and staff.**

### **Legal Powers:**

- LGA 1972 s101 (1)(a) and (2)
- LGA 1972 s102(3)
- Localism Act 2011 ss1-8