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Chair and Vice-Chair
Overview & Scrutiny
Management Committee
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Dear John and Charlie

UPDATED CORPORATE PLAN 2017-18

Thank you for your letters dated 3rd and 15th February expressing Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee's support for the 2017/18 Corporate Plan. Several amendments have been made to the Plan in response to the constructive feedback provided by OSMC, and I believe it is an even better quality document as a result.

Please see the table below for my responses to OSMC's specific feedback:

	OSMC Feedback	The Mayor's Response
1.	Concern was raised over the phrase ' value for money ' as Members were of the opinion that because something was the cheapest option did not make it any better value. It was recognised that the Council needs to act in a cost effective manner within its available finances but it was felt that there should be more emphasis on money being spent to present better outcomes and to consider the social value.	<p>I very much agree that the achievement of value for money requires more than a focus on saving money, even with the significant budget reductions we continue to face. Using our resources effectively, to deliver better outcomes for residents, must be the overriding objective. Overall, I do believe the updated Corporate Plan strikes the right balance, for example, as reflected in this sentence on page 3 it will reflect both the financial imperatives and the focus on outcomes:</p> <p>'The next stage in our improvement journey will require a greater focus on the things that matter most for Doncaster and the actions that will have the greatest impact'.</p> <p>Ensuring value for money is at the heart of everything we do should remain a key part of our overall purpose as a Council, but as OSMC point out, it should not be narrowly defined.</p>

2.	<p>Building Community Resilience and Self-Reliance - Concern was raised about the ability to deliver this when there may be less community assets in the future. The Committee recognised that this was about identifying what the community needed and maximising what was available to achieve it.</p>	<p>I agree that this presents a challenge, given that the Council has significantly less resources. However, as my budget proposals show, the Council will continue to invest in Doncaster's assets, for example, by delivering improvements to schools, public leisure centres, cultural amenities and roads.</p> <p>As the Committee recognises, there are also many opportunities. We need to have a better understanding of what we already have, the untapped community potential and how to make the best use of it. We need to support communities to connect and direct their strengths and assets to where they are most needed and where they can have an impact.</p> <p>Over the next year, the Council and its partners in Team Doncaster will develop, in more detail, the work to build community resilience and self-reliance.</p>
3.	<p>Working with our Partners to provide effective leadership and governance – Members commented that the model the Council is working to may change in the future as a result of devolution.</p> <p>It was suggested that this objective include reference to stakeholders and/or residents.</p> <p>In respect of indicators, it was asked that this be made clearer explaining how the gap would be narrowed. Members were of the opinion that that the Council should be considering narrowing the gap with national averages as well as local ones as it should look at striving to be more successful in a national setting.</p>	<p>There may certainly be changes over forthcoming years which affect the Council's governance arrangements. The Council is working with its partners in Team Doncaster, across the region, and with Government, to ensure we are on the front foot in ensuring Devolution benefits Doncaster and its residents.</p> <p>The objective has been reworded to include residents:</p> <p>'Working with our partners and residents to provide effective leadership and governance'</p> <p>Indicators aimed at narrowing the gap now also include reference to narrowing the gap with national averages, (where relevant), for example:</p> <p>'The gap between different groups and the rate of people that claim out of work benefits compared to the Doncaster and national averages narrows'</p> <p>Over the next year, the Council and its partners in Team Doncaster will develop in more detail the actions to narrow the gaps in quality of life.</p>
4.	<p>Doncaster Working – Members suggested that this be strengthened by including Doncaster residents as a named partner. It was also put forward that there should be more emphasis on achieving this through a combination of private/public sector working.</p>	<p>All of the Themes on pages 6-10 now include residents in 'The partners who can help us' sections.</p> <p>On page 7 under 'Our ambition' it now states:</p> <p>'The local economy will continue to grow through inward investment, the growth of existing firms and excellent partnership working between the public and private sector.'</p>

<p>5.</p>	<p>Doncaster Caring – Members suggested that residents should be a named partner as it would not be possible to deliver this objective without enabling them to do so.</p> <p>Regarding indicators, it was felt that they should include the number of people volunteering and community groups set up.</p> <p>There was also a discussion about including outcome measures on 'how satisfied people are with their care'. Comments were also raised about engaging and supporting carers. It was put forward that we need to look at the policies of our key partners such as the police in how they address care in the community so we can ensure that we undertake a more joined up approach.</p> <p>Finally, concern was raised over older children with more complex needs that may fall through gaps in the system. It was acknowledged that there was a cross over between Doncaster Learning and Doncaster Caring but it was believed that this aspect should be strengthened.</p>	<p>Residents are now named as partners.</p> <p>I agree with the second point and page 8 of the Corporate Plan rightly states:</p> <p>'Doncaster's adults and children's health and social care services, and how we support our most at risk and vulnerable people, will be focused on prevention, early intervention and enabling people to be safe, healthy and independent at home and in their communities'.</p> <p>Work is underway to ensure Team Doncaster has a clearer understanding of the current scale and potential of volunteering and community group activity in Doncaster. To achieve this, the Strategy & Performance Team are currently drafting a Volunteering Strategy which will include a range of indicators needed to support Team Doncaster's objectives.</p> <p>The following indicator has now been included:</p> <p>'How satisfied people are with their care'</p> <p>I agree that a co-ordinated Team Doncaster approach is needed to more effectively engage and support carers. The further development of the joint framework of priorities, outcomes and programmes of activity, as summarised on page 12 of the Corporate Plan, will be key to achieving this and the many other quality of life improvements we are working in partnership to deliver.</p> <p>The above point also applies to the concern raised by the Committee regarding older children. I would add that it is essential that we make the links within and between the priority themes in the Corporate Plan. This includes how different services and interventions relate to each other, and support each other.</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>Doncaster Living - Views were expressed that the wording should reflect that this was about villages as well as town centres.</p> <p>It was also suggested that 'citizens' should be replaced with 'residents' to make the plan more consistent.</p>	<p>The relevant sentence on page 9 under 'Our Ambition' has been reworded:</p> <p>'Our ambition for 2017-18 will include the re-shaping of services across the partnership to improve our town centres and villages.</p> <p>'Citizens' now replaced with 'residents'</p>

	<p>In respect of more shops becoming occupied, it was proposed that the wording should state that it is about creating more shops 'that support the Councils ambitions' to ensure that there are no conflicts with what the Council is trying to achieve, for example, reducing obesity.</p> <p>Reference was also made to the prominence of green spaces as it was felt that this was something that could have a significant positive impact on the lives of residents.</p> <p>It was added that neighbourhood plans seek to protect green spaces and therefore a reference to those could address this.</p> <p>In respect of active lives, there was a discussion about how the Council could make it easier for residents to become more physically active. Comments were raised about the potential and benefits of developing cycle paths and walking routes perhaps by extending the Trans Pennine trail to link and improve access to Doncaster's villages and popular local destinations such as the Dome.</p> <p>Finally, it was commented that more should be added about celebrating our rich heritage and on this basis it was suggested that Doncaster Cast should be identified as a named partner.</p>	<p>The Indicator on page 9 has now been amended to:</p> <p>'More people visit our town centres'</p> <p>This is to reflect that the actions to achieve this will need to cover more than empty shops, and also that there are wider policy considerations, for example, obesity.</p> <p>The Plan now better reflects the importance of both green spaces and heritage. This paragraph is included on page 9 under 'Why':</p> <p>'...When combined with our significant green space, heritage, space for economic development and excellent transport connections, we already have a significant amount to be proud of.'</p> <p>Whilst Neighbourhood Plans are not specifically referenced in the Corporate Plan, they will continue to be developed alongside the Local Plan, which is one of the key plans which will help to deliver outcomes in the Corporate Plan, for example 'a thriving and resilient economy' and a 'thriving, resilient and inclusive place to live, work and visit'.</p> <p>Over the next year, the Council and its partners in Team Doncaster will refresh the Physical Activity and Sport Strategy and set out in more detail the actions needed to support residents to become more physically active, including relating to walking and cycling. We have just commenced a review of Cycling Strategy which will consider the infrastructure for cycling across Doncaster.</p> <p>CAST has now been added as a partner.</p>
7.	<p>Capable Council Fit For the Future – Members questioned if the wording around buying more from local providers could be more specific to incorporate 'commission' and the 'VolCom sector'. They were informed however, that clarification needed to be sought on whether this could be considered due to clear rules in purchasing.</p>	<p>For reasons alluded to in the Committee's feedback, the indicator has not been changed. However, as mentioned above, work is underway to ensure Team Doncaster has a clearer understanding of the current scale and potential of volunteering and community group activity in Doncaster.</p>

	<p>In respect of key partners it was suggested that Town and Parish Councils be added along with the 'workforce'.</p> <p>Members expressed disappointment that a Community Engagement Strategy still needed to be developed and felt that it was essential in achieving the Councils ambitions.</p> <p>In respect of the strapline, it was questioned whether 'capable' was the most suitable word and other suggestions including 'ambitious', 'modern' and 'connected' were proposed as alternatives. In terms of benchmarking, it was recognised that it was always valuable to consider what others are undertaking although acknowledged that what may work elsewhere would not necessarily work in Doncaster</p>	<p>Town and Parish Councils have been added, along with Council staff.</p> <p>Ensuring we engage with the residents and communities effectively is key to achieving what we have set out in the Corporate Plan. The approach to engaging with communities will be developed in conjunction with stakeholders in 2017-18.</p> <p>'Capable Council' now amended to 'Connected Council'.</p>
8.	<p>That reference to the Great Yorkshire Way and the development of the Robin Hood Airport Doncaster is strengthened as these are viewed as key priorities for Doncaster as well as the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP).</p>	<p>This has now been strengthened by the inclusion of this paragraph on page 4:</p> <p>'The further development of the Great Yorkshire Way will encourage more companies to invest in Doncaster to create jobs and prosperity for residents, attract more visitors, and support growth at the airport. To further support growth at the airport we are also seeking to connect it to the rail network.'</p>
9.	<p>Doncaster Living - Concern was raised that current housing policies were not developing housing for the future that were 'fit for purpose'. An example was mentioned that houses on new developments were built with parking spaces in front for only one and a half spaces or small garages that are not enough wider enough for a large family car. It was felt that links to planning needed to be further improved and developed, although we acknowledge the Corporate Plan should not go into the detail of specific planning issues.</p>	<p>Whilst acknowledging the importance of planning policy, and the impact it can have on the quality of life of our residents, I agree with the Committee that the Corporate Plan should not go into the detail of specific planning policy issues.</p>

10.	Doncaster Learning - It was felt that there needed to be more emphasis on older people being able to access training and development to allow them to make beneficial changes to their lives or consider employment opportunities. Concern was raised about cost being a barrier to learning. It was recognised that this linked into the Corporate Plans objective that "learning and creativity is supported through a whole person, whole life focus" and avenues may be presented through the Councils response to the Education and Skills Commission.	I am glad the Committee recognises the importance of a 'whole person, whole life' focus to learning, which means all residents are able to access the learning opportunities they require. This is being developed as part of our response to the independent commission on Education and Skills in Doncaster.
11.	Members were pleased to hear that proposals for an Institute of Technology and a University Technical College were being taken. It was acknowledged that these would provide additional technical routes into well paid, skilled jobs and enhance what the High Speed Rail College will be able to bring to Doncaster, something Members felt was much needed.	I agree with the committee that the opening of the National College for High Speed Rail in Doncaster presents excellent opportunities for local people. Proposals for a University Technical College and an Institute for Technology in Doncaster seek to further enhance our technical learning assets to position Doncaster as a centre for vocational excellence.

I am pleased that Members felt that the updated Corporate Plan was excellent, succinct and reads well, especially by being broken down into different sections. I would also welcome OSMC involvement in any subsequent reviews and monitoring of the Corporate Plan.

Yours sincerely



Ros Jones
Mayor of Doncaster