

Future Chard Strategy

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Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of the report is to provide District Executive with a draft of the Future Chard Strategy and to seek approval to progress to public consultation.

Forward Plan

2. This report appeared on the District Executive Forward Plan with an original anticipated Committee date of 2 September 2021. It was moved forward to the October 2021 meeting on the recommendation of the Strategic Leadership Team.

Public Interest

3. The draft Future Chard Strategy considers Chard's needs from the perspective of both people and place. It looks at the town's strengths and weaknesses, and the future opportunities and threats. The draft strategy proposes a long-term vision, priorities and action plan that aim to make Chard a prosperous place for all in the future.

Recommendations

4. That District Executive recommends that the Chief Executive:
 - a. offers feedback on the vision and priorities identified within the strategy
 - b. approves the draft Future Chard Strategy to progress to public consultation

Background

5. PER Consulting was appointed by South Somerset District Council to develop a new place-based strategy for Chard 2021-2035, to drive the town's long-term prosperity.
6. There are a number of significant challenges for residents of Chard. This includes urban deprivation, with several areas falling within the 20% most deprived nationally for education and skills, as well as concerns around income deprivation for example. There is poor social mobility, linked to low skills and income opportunity.
7. There is also a lower number of working people than is typical for Somerset and, where someone is employed, this is more likely to be in a low wage job. The economy is particularly vulnerable to closures, as seen in the announcement from Oscar Mayer



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regarding closure of its manufacturing plant in Chard, with the loss of more than 800 jobs, representing 15% of jobs in the town.

- This place-based strategy seeks to address these challenges and tests a new way of working in the area. If successful, it could be rolled out to other towns. The draft strategy sets out a long-term vision for Chard and the steps needed to reach it. Although Local Government Reorganisation (which was decided during the development of this strategy) means that SSDC will not be the main delivery agency, it will remain highly relevant to the new unitary authority, who will have the opportunity to take the lead.

Future Chard Strategy

- The PER Consulting team was commissioned to draft a long-term strategy that responds to the interplay of economic factors, the physical and natural environment, infrastructure delivery, deprivation and the wider determinants of health – considering both people and place and the halo effect of positive impact in one area on another.
- PER Consulting has been supported by the SSDC Place & Recovery officer team to draw together an evidence base of data, engage in one-to-one and group conversations with key stakeholders in Chard, conduct a community survey and visit the town to meet with local people and get a sense of its physical geography.



- This research has provided an understanding of Chard’s needs, from its current strengths and weaknesses to its future opportunities and threats. The insight drawn from this complete picture has led to the proposed long-term vision, priorities and action plan for the short, medium and long term set out in the draft Future Chard Strategy appended to this paper.
- District Executive is asked to provide comments on this draft strategy and then – following any update required in response – to allow this draft strategy to progress to public consultation. This would be conducted during the autumn via in-person events (covid-19 permitting).
- Following this consultation, it is proposed that the updated draft Future Chard Strategy is brought back to District Executive, prior to being taken to Full Council for adoption.
- The proposed timetable is as follows:

Public consultation period	8 th October to 7 th November 2021
Updates, amendments, papers prepared, etc.	8 th to 12 th November 2021
Updated Strategy to Senior Leadership Team	22 nd November 2021
Updated Strategy to Scrutiny	30 th November 2021
Updated Strategy to District Executive	2 nd December 2021



Financial Implications

15. There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. However, once the final strategy is adopted, should SSDC wish to begin delivery prior to Local Government Reorganisation, consideration will need to be given to funding its delivery, through the Council's financial planning processes.
16. The strategy will also put SSDC and/or the new unitary authority in a strong position to apply for future strategic funds, attracting new resources into the area.

Legal implications (if any) and details of Statutory Powers

17. None arising from this report.

Risk Matrix

18. Not applicable to this report.

Council Plan Implications

19. This strategy supports our ambitions for regeneration and improved economic prosperity within South Somerset, consistent with our stated areas of focus and priority projects.

Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

20. None arising from this report, although we would expect future activities to be consistent with our stated ambitions around net zero by 2030

Equality and Diversity Implications

21. None arising from this report.

Privacy Impact Assessment

22. There is no personal data associated with this report.

Background Papers

- Draft Future Chard Strategy
- Appendix 1 – Draft Future Chard Strategy Action Plan
- Appendix 2 – Social & Economic Baseline Report