

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING/ DECISION MAKER:	Cabinet	
MEETING/ DECISION DATE:	10 September 2014	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
		E 2607
TITLE:	Draft Advice & Information Strategy 2014-2017	
WARD:	All	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report: Appendix 1 - Draft Advice & Information Strategy 2014/17 Appendix 2 – Feedback Received on the Draft Strategy		

1 THE ISSUE

1.1 In December 2013 and January 2014, the draft Advice & Information Strategy was put out to consultation. As a result of that exercise, the draft Strategy has been revised and the resulting document made available for feedback from members of the public, service providers and other stakeholders. The document attached as Appendix 1 is the result of the second round of consultation and has come back to Cabinet for approval for adoption. Details of the feedback received are attached as Appendix 2.

2 RECOMMENDATION

2.1 That the draft Strategy is agreed.

2.2 That the feedback received and subsequent amendments are noted.

3 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

The draft Strategy will help to promote people's wellbeing by increasing their ability to exercise choice and control, it is also a vital component of preventing or delaying people's need for care and support. This will support the delivery of the approved savings identified in the Medium Term Service and Resource Plan.

The Strategy will also form part of the Better Care Fund Plan, which has an individual strand relating to information and advice. The strategy will be essential to maintain the relationship between the Council and the Clinical Commissioning Group.

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS AND BASIS FOR PROPOSAL

4.1 The Council is committed to promoting and enhancing the quality of local people's lives through the commitments set out in the joint Health & Wellbeing Strategy, under the themes:

- helping people to stay healthy
- improving the quality of people's lives
- creating fairer life changes.

4.2 The Council's corporate objectives also underpin the draft Strategy –

- Promoting independence and positive lives for everyone;
- Creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live;
- Building a stronger economy

4.3 The Council has a number of statutory power and duties, the discharge of which are assisted by the provision of services as outlined in draft Strategy.

4.4 The Care Act requires that the Authority must establish and maintain a service to provide comprehensive advice and information on care and support, including costs and how these can be met. The Think Local, Act Personal agenda articulates the Government's increasing emphasis on enabling people to make informed choices for themselves.

4.5 The Government has embarked on a rolling programme of welfare reform including the introduction of universal credit; the draft Strategy aims to ensure that we are able to respond effectively to the advice and information needs of individuals and families affected by these national policies.

5 THE REPORT

5.1 The draft Strategy sets out a rational approach and framework to support delivery of high quality advice and information service which addresses the needs of people across Bath & North East Somerset. It promotes service improvements and incorporates partnership working across the sector in its delivery, with the aim of enabling easier access to advice and information.

5.2 Delivery of the outcomes of the draft Strategy will make an important contribution to delivering the Council's new statutory responsibilities set out in the Care Act 2014, parts of which come in to force from April 2015.

5.3 In delivering the outcomes of the draft Strategy, the need for advice and information associated with the Government's Welfare Reforms will be addressed.

6 RATIONALE

6.1 The Council provides advice and information to its customers about all of the services it has responsibility for delivering (directly or indirectly). It also provides advice and information about partner organisations which may in some cases be better placed to support customers with specific areas of need. Advice and Information is provided directly by Council staff and also by partner organisations, on both a commissioned and non-commissioned basis.

6.2 This draft Strategy has been developed to ensure that the delivery of advice and information is coordinated and coherent across the organisation and its partners and that it is delivered in the most effective and efficient way possible. This is particularly important in the context of shrinking budgets and the need to maximise resources. It will ensure that the customer receives the same consistent and high quality service, regardless of where and how the advice / information services covered within the strategy, are accessed.

6.3 Approval of the draft Strategy for implementation will enable officers to work with stakeholders and partners on delivery planning.

6.4 Approval will enable the procurement process for advice and information services to begin. Procurement of the service will contribute to the targets set out in the Medium Term Financial Plan. The Council's adopted 'Think Local' policy will be fully taken into account in the procurement of the service.

7 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

7.1 None.

8 CONSULTATION

8.1 The draft Strategy has undergone two periods of consultation. The first ran from 11 December 2013 until 24 January 2014. The results of this were shared with Cabinet in February 2014 and used to develop a revised draft Strategy, which was consulted on between 28 July and 15 August 2014. A survey was placed on the Council's website inviting members of the public to give their views and an electronic link circulated to a number of stakeholder groups, providers and commissioning colleagues.

8.2 Appendix 2 to this report sets out the responses to the on-line survey including a joint response from the local advice partnership, APEX. The draft document now being considered by Cabinet has been amended in light of those responses.

8.3 The changes made as a consequence of the consultation are:

- The text supporting the linear diagram on page 3 has been expanded to give greater clarity regarding the degree of support needed to access advice & information services.
- Categories of themes covered have been re-organised to bring Education, Training & Employment together and separating out Childcare Provision (see page 3).

8.4 In addition to the formal consultations, the views of a wide range of stakeholders have been sought and taken into account in the development of the draft Strategy. Feedback has been considered and, where appropriate, has influenced the contents. Broad support has come from the local advice and information sector for the aims and objectives it sets out.

8.5 The draft Strategy will be delivered through development, in partnership with advice sector partners, of a detailed action plan which will set out how the objectives will be met. The detailed action plan will also, reflect, comments from the consultation that are more appropriately picked up in and addressed by the action plan than in the Strategy itself. Delivery will be achieved in partnership with local providers and other stakeholders.

9 RISK MANAGEMENT

9.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.

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Background papers	None
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