

Corporate Plan for North Dorset 2014 – 2019

Contents

Page	
2.	Contents
3.	Summary
4.	Introduction
5.	Vision and Core Values
6.	Living and Working in North Dorset
7.	The Key Challenges
8.	Priorities for 2014/2019
9	Strategic Plans
15.	The Vision for 2020 – the Shape of the Council
16.	Managing the Finances
17.	Workforce
18.	Focus
19.	Delivery of Services (Mixed Economy Model)
21.	Monitor and Review

Summary

The context

The area will experience expansion which needs to be well planned. There are challenges of low wages, low skills and high house prices

In future councils will reduce in size and the role of local communities is being encouraged to grow

Funding from Government will continue to reduce and the Council will operate in an uncertain financial climate

What's important?

To understand and influence the well-being factors that affect quality of life in North Dorset:

- Economic growth
- Unemployment and low wages
- Active welfare support
- Volunteering
- A built environment that is sociable and green
- Loneliness
- Treating people with respect
- Empowering communities

What are we going to do?

Work with partners to promote business and housing growth

Provide high quality services suited to the need of customers and residents

Shape the Council for 2020

Balance economic growth with preserving the environment

Ensure our policies enable fair access to services and influence wellbeing for all residents

We aim to invest in

Broadband connection for local business

Access to services and affordable housing

Support for communities

Skills

Apprenticeships

New partnerships to deliver services

Managing the finances

Robust financial planning

Reduction of costs whilst maintaining and improving standards

Responsible capital spending where investment is important

Fund priorities

Search for new sources of income

The future

Satisfaction with the quality of life and the area is enhanced

Communities and Parishes enabled to take a greater role in their future

Our local knowledge influences other public services to bring about beneficial change

A user friendly Council with appropriate skills and agility for future challenges

Introduction

Corporate Plan 2014-2019

The priorities of the Council have been reviewed to reflect the times of austerity for the country and the requirement to boost the national economy. It is in the national and local interest that the priority is for economic growth while seeking to retain a fair, balanced approach to providing access to services and enhancing the quality of life of people in the area.

There is an unknown future for all local authorities with the likelihood of further reductions in public spending. Reductions are predicted to continue until at least 2020; this is within the context of local authority funding having been reduced by 35% since 2010. This Council has reduced its spending substantially since 2006. Within the years of this plan, the Council and the shape of the Council is likely to change. The immediate challenge for 2015/16 is to prepare for further cost reductions in future years. The Council takes a prudent approach and seeks to obtain best value for each £1 spent. The Council will give attention to motivate its staff and partners to continue to deliver real benefit to residents in North Dorset and at the same time be flexible, lean, efficient and ready and able to make change happen when required. We have badged this programme "Charting our Course" aiming to keep the ship, North Dorset District Council, with a fit and able crew. Our destination port between 2014 and 2020 is not yet decided but it is important that public services are maintained and enhanced and residents are engaged with, enabled and empowered to have more say over their lives and over the Council's services.

Vision and Core Values

Shared Vision for North Dorset

Where thriving, balanced and environmentally responsible communities in our market towns and surrounding villages build economic prosperity while safeguarding our unique surroundings.

This is underpinned by our Core Values

- **Take pride in our community**

We contribute to the success of our community through effective and efficient working practice with the aim of improving the overall quality of life. We engage with, listen to, represent, respect, challenge and promote the diverse and sometimes opposing views of our community.

- **Value our people**

We support local communities to develop strong leadership; learning and responding to individuals and groups, treating them fairly and with respect. We support employees in their personal development, recognising and valuing their contribution to achieving the Council's key objectives and promote their well being.

- **Take pride in our services**

We work in partnership to develop cost effective, innovative services that meet the needs of the community and deliver our identified key priorities. We deliver and support transparent, reasoned and accountable decision making in all our services. We protect and enhance our rural and built environments for future generations.

Living and Working in North Dorset

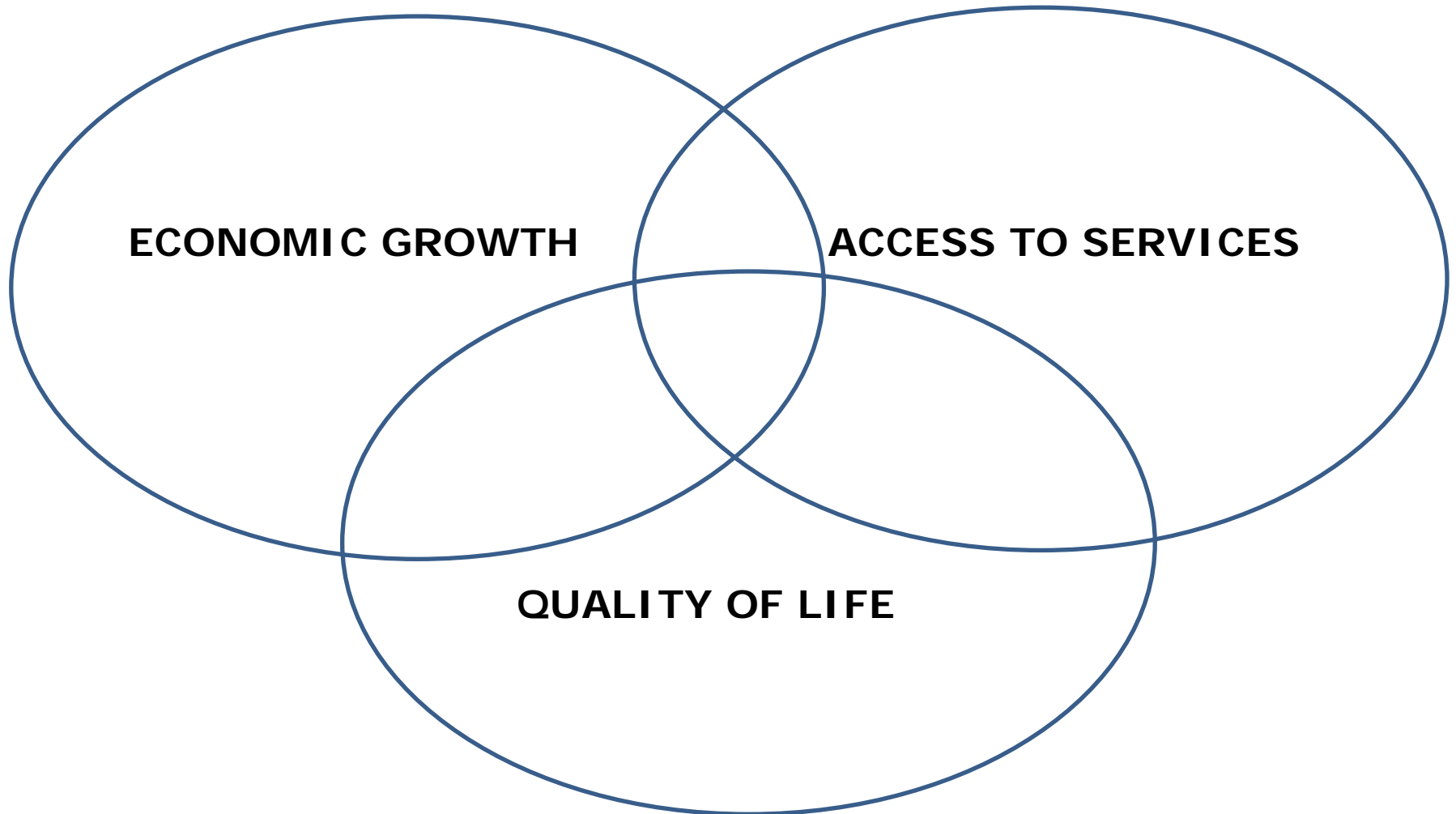
- At 235 square miles, North Dorset is the second largest of the Dorset districts, covering almost a quarter of the county's area.
- Almost 51% of the population lives in the main market towns of Blandford Forum, Gillingham, Shaftesbury, Stalbridge and Sturminster Newton with the remainder of the population living in approximately 50 small villages and hamlets.
- The ACORN socio-economic classifications show that just under 46% of North Dorset households are categorised as wealthy achievers- more than double the national average. 12% are either hard pressed or of moderate means lower than both the Dorset and national average
- 14% of households in North Dorset do not have a car and only 2% get to work by public transport
- Unemployment is lower than the national average. 44% of the workforce is employed in the knowledge driven sector (below the county average 47%) with over 33% of the population working in the public sector.
- The District has a rich heritage of historic buildings, with over 2500 listed buildings, 45 conservation areas and 158 scheduled monuments, providing invaluable insight into our social and economic past. Over 39% of the district is designated as being in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- No area in the district has been identified as being amongst the 20% most educationally deprived in England
- Crime rates in North Dorset are much lower than the national or county average and crimes involving violence are relatively rare.
- Life expectancy for both men and women is around two years longer than the national average as are early deaths from cancer, heart disease and stroke. 71% of people feel that they are in good health.
- Two strategic transport corridors run through the northern and southern edges of the district: Exeter to London via A303 and the railway. Weymouth to London corridor via A31 and A35.
- The north-south corridor via A350 and C13 is used by freight.
- The community planning model in North Dorset has four 'local community partnerships' based on the market towns with potential for a fifth partnership.
- Further education facilities are outside the district.

The Key Challenges

- Stimulating the growth of the economy is a national priority for the country as a whole. North Dorset has a low average wage in spite of a low unemployment rate relative to the rest of Dorset the south west and the UK. The average weekly wage of North Dorset residents is the second lowest in Dorset and well below the national average.
- Communication infrastructure and public transport service provision is generally poor. Over 12,500 people do not have access to a frequent bus service and over 86% of residents in the district are dependent on private transport. 14% do not have access to a vehicle. Broadband coverage is poor outside the towns and speeds are low. 32% of North Dorset has internet speeds of 2 mbps or lower.
- Community life in rural areas is under threat with 30% of North Dorset's population is deprived of access to services and 75% of rural parishes in North Dorset no longer have a shop selling general produce. Difficulties in accessing services are a frequently raised problem for older and young people in remote rural areas and those on low incomes who feel isolated and feel less empowered in getting their voice heard.
- The health profile for the district indicates that statutory homelessness is worse than average and that there are increasing and higher risk drinking and excessive winter deaths. Health priorities include anxiety, depression, type two diabetes, circulatory disease and harm caused by road traffic collisions.
- The population has now reached 69,000 (2011 census) having seen growth of 6.5% over the last ten years - the highest rate of growth of all Dorset's districts. North Dorset is anticipated to grow by a further 2,300 by 2019. As the population grows there will be increasing pressure to plan and act in an environmentally responsive way so that the natural and historic environment is protected.
- 22.6% of the population in North Dorset is over retirement age and although this figure varies considerably between the rural and town wards overall it is still significantly higher than the national average of 19.5%. More of our residents who are aged 20 to 29 years live in town wards rather than the rural areas and overall this age group has fallen by 36% over the past ten years.
- Despite a high rate of housing development, house prices remain high and, coupled with low wages, makes North Dorset one of the least affordable areas for first time buyers in the county - The average housing price to income ratio (lower quartile) is 9.38. Over 3,780 dwellings have been built in North Dorset over the past 10 years and 638 of these were affordable housing association properties. Young people and young working families find it difficult to afford suitable housing and, with the growing number of older people, there will be an increased demand for more accessible or supported housing
- The consequences of the current and likely future squeeze on public sector finances will put real pressures on our budgets at a time of increasing demands for and expectations of our services.

Priorities for 2014-2019

The Council has identified three strategic priorities. This way of describing our priorities, as linked and overlapping clusters of activity and expenditure, gives us a tool to map use of resources against priorities, to quantify the value they add and to identify when resources need to be refocused.



Strategic Plans

Economic Growth

To help to stimulate economic growth and increase the number of new homes built within the district

“North Dorset is open for business and aims to have a thriving economy that offers better jobs and prospects for local people. The economic vitality of businesses in North Dorset is an essential factor in shaping the quality of life and prosperity of communities.”

Ambitions:

1. With the Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership create conditions for a growing and sustainable economy with more high value and skilled jobs
2. Adopt a Local Plan to guide development in the district up to 2026
3. Increase the number of new homes built within the district to meet local need across all tenures and reduce the number of empty properties
4. Improve the job prospects for local people by developing access to training, education and apprenticeships so that the quality of skills in the local labour market promotes business growth.
5. Encourage the development of employment sites throughout the district to meet future businesses needs and stimulate jobs.
6. With the town teams and other partners support plans for sustainable economic growth in our market towns as vibrant economic hubs offering a wide range of goods and services.
7. Secure funding directly and disseminate opportunities for funding to our partners so that the Council attracts as much resource as possible to the area
8. Help businesses to access superfast broadband so that they can optimize their productivity and profitability
9. Reduce burdens to businesses by ensuring that our policies and the speed of decision making of our regulation services support growth and respond to business needs in a proportionate, consistent and transparent way.
10. Raise the profile of the district as a desirable place to do business
11. Create the conditions for employment and access to goods and services in rural areas of the district

Actions to deliver Economic Growth ambitions for 2014/2015 have been identified in the following business plans:

- Development Services
- Planning Policy
- Regeneration
- Food Safety
- HR and Organisational Development

Key improvement plan projects to support the delivery of Economic Growth ambitions:

- Economic Development Programme – to promote balanced development of strategic employment and housing sites by coordinating with landowners, attracting funding and development management.
- Housing Strategy –Focusing the Councils wider enabling role on building more of the right type of homes in the right places; meeting housing need of all of our communities and improving the existing housing and promoting energy efficiency.
- Community Led Economic Development and Town Teams – to support communities identify and implement their plans that promote economically vibrant market towns and local communities
- Adopting a Local Plan – Delivering the long term strategic plan for the district
- Strategic Growth Area for Gillingham – Managing the largest expansion programme in the LEP for 1800 homes and increase in employment with appropriate community infrastructure

Access to Services

To improve access to services that are shaped and prioritised around the needs and preferences of our customers.

“Our customers must be able to access the information and the services that they need, when they need to and wherever they are. We will offer services using digital channels such as websites, texting, social media and other relevant forms of communication so that people can use the same tools that they are already using for their personal or business needs. We will retain face to face and other routes for people who need them”.

Ambitions:

1. Improve customer satisfaction by embedding customer excellence across all our services with a right first time approach
2. Enhance and improve the transactional capability of our website and encourage more people to choose self-delivery
3. Develop opportunities with other Councils to rationalise services and improve quality
4. Measure our current costs and re-engineer our processes to improve efficiency
5. Help our community partners and other volunteers to deliver services and individual projects for their neighbourhoods
6. Commission services shaped by customer insight and deliver what people actually tell us they need.
7. Create opportunities to deliver our in depth customer service for other councils.
8. Maintain and support multi– agency community hubs to provide face to face contact where it is needed.
9. Implement flexible ways of working so that staff can access customer records and do their job from any location
10. Implement new ways to offer customers receive information about our services and news

Actions to deliver Access to Services ambitions for 2014/2015 have been identified in the following business plans:

- Customer Services
- HR and Organisational Development
- Planning Policy
- Regeneration
- Food Safety
- Business Improvement and Scrutiny
- Financial Services

Key improvement plan projects to support the delivery of Access to Services ambitions:

- Customer Access Strategy – Ensuring that residents and businesses can access services locally at a time more convenient to their needs and with trained staff that have excellent customer service skills that want to use feedback to deliver better services.
- Shared Services – Setting out proposals for a phased programme that accommodates the individual and shared priorities and ambitions of the three Councils.
- Asset Management Work Programme – Improving the use of property assets so that they result in more efficient and effective service delivery
- Stour Valley Partnership extension to Poole – Integrating the current partnership of three Councils with Poole Borough Council to deliver a service that will manage the tax collection and benefits administration more efficiently
- Business Change Programme - Delivering £160,000 savings from the ICT budget; introducing more flexible working and implementing the Digital Access Strategy.

Quality of Life

To ensure our policies, the decisions we take and the services we provide balance the needs of the different groups which make up our community and to discharge our responsibility to maintain the quality of life enjoyed by our residents.

“The quality of life available to the residents of North Dorset is one of the defining characteristics of the district. It is the reason many people chose to live here and it can attract wealth and employment to the area. People look to their local council to preserve and enhance their quality of life and to provide them with the opportunities to enjoy the natural environment, prosper and live healthy and independent lives”

1. Balance the development of housing, infrastructure and economic activity with the need to preserve the character and quality of the districts countryside our built heritage and areas of outstanding natural beauty.
2. Secure investment so new development contributes to the provision of the infrastructure needed by communities
3. Help to support and encourage communities to develop neighbourhood plans so that local people have a say in shaping growth and the quality of life in the places in which they live
4. Support socially active and engaged communities by empowering partnerships and volunteers and giving them a voice.
5. Coordinate a consortium of multi-agencies to provide advice to people who are vulnerable manage changes arising from universal credit and to develop life skills to meet the change in welfare reform
6. Focus our services and work with partners in such a way that people are more able to live independently and safely
7. Gain a better understanding of the support needed to safeguard vulnerable adults and children in the district by sharing information and action plans with partners.
8. Ensure the Dorset Waste Partnership provides the most efficient service for the resources available to meet the needs of residents, recycling targets and agreed cost reductions.
9. Work with local health partners to deliver information, health and lifestyle services to create conditions for people to improve their health and wellbeing
10. Use our powers to reduce environmental nuisance where possible and enforce Council policies and decisions in a fair and consistent expect.
11. Encourage landlords and homeowners to improve and maintain homes to a decent standard.
12. Develop policies and take decisions that are proportionate and transparent and which reflect fairness as perceived by the community

Actions to deliver Access to Services ambitions for 2014/2015 have been identified in the following business plans:

- Development Services
- Environment
- Planning policy
- Regeneration
- Customer Services
- Housing Services
- Environmental Protection
- Food Safety
- Legal Services
- Business Improvement and Scrutiny

Key improvement plan projects to support the delivery of Quality of life ambitions :

- Neighbourhood Plans – Supporting volunteering and helping communities to prepare and implement community plans which bring people together and empower them to improve their lives and neighbourhoods.
- Local Support Services – developing a triaged support service in partnership with Department of Work and Pensions, Local Authorities, Third Sector, Health and Community Professionals to assist our vulnerable customers and claimants through welfare reforms, personal budgeting and debt management, digital access and back into employment.
- Income Earning Potential – Identifying opportunities to bring in more income to the Council that can be used to develop services

The Vision for 2020 – Shaping the Future of the Council

By 2020 the Council will need to be transformed to meet the challenge of reducing central funding from Government. In recent years the Council has reduced its costs by over 40%. It has done this by sharing the delivery of services with other councils, by working with communities to deliver local services differently, and by a programme of transformation within the Council to reduce its costs. North Dorset has an award winning Community Partnership model, close working with Parish Councils and an army of volunteers to whom the Council and residents are indebted and without whom it could not have shaped the way services are delivered and experienced in North Dorset. The Council has **Chartered a Course** to be ready for the next change:

“An Influencing Council” – to accept it will not deliver all services itself and will seek the most effective way to champion the needs of residents and businesses with other agencies and to create sustainable conditions for economic growth.

“An Agile Council” – to develop an effective, resilient and high performing workforce making the best use of the Council’s assets.

“A Customer Friendly Council” – to transform the delivery of services enabling easy access and aiming always to get it right first time. The customer team provides a comprehensive assistance to those in need. We deliver this service for other councils and aim to extend the provision of that service further.

Council Services are delivered by a mixed economy of arrangements which include shared, locally delivered, outsourced and partner delivered services. The next step will be to deliver the following **action plan** to meet the cost reductions anticipated between 2015-2020.

- a) Growth:
 - Growing the number of businesses in the area
 - Winning business for the Council
 - Bidding for funds and increasing earned income
- b) Shared Services:
 - Exploration of a fuller partnership
 - Joint service development
- c) Overheads and Property Costs:
 - Reduce ICT costs and overheads
 - Increase income from property
 - Review the usage of the Nordon site
- d) Digital and Local Access:
 - Increase online access to services

Managing the Finances

The financial environment in which we operate is demanding both in the present and longer term as we face having to make budget reductions during a period of extreme change. Balancing the budget will be the overriding policy issue during the life of this plan. Our Medium Term Financial Plan, which sets our revenue requirements and capital budget over a five year planning period, together with a savings plan, aims to achieve a sustainable financial position to target financial resources to realise priority areas identified in this plan.

The government has set challenging financial targets for all councils over the next four years which will mean that the Council will have to decrease its level of expenditure from the 2013/14 financial year by around £1.699M about 16% of gross expenditure by 2018/19. The Rate Support Grant decreased from £2.179 M in 2013/2014 to £1.689M in 2014/2015 a drop of £490,000 -22.5%. Specific funding reductions for subsequent years are predicted over the coming years and therefore affordability will be the key driver that we use to meet our priorities. We will continue to protect front line services whilst delivering the efficiencies to balance the Council's finances by looking for opportunities to work in partnership and to find solutions that will deliver services locally. The Council produces a Medium Term Financial Plan annually which is kept under review.

Council Tax

North Dorset residents continue to have one of the lowest District Council tax in England. The Medium Term Financial Plan assumes small annual rises at less than the rate of inflation or the acceptance of a Freeze Grant from Government.

Investing in our Infrastructure

The Capital Programme is an investment programme to support the Council's Corporate Plan priorities. The Council's priorities for investment are:

- Disabled Facilities
- Supporting Broadband connections into North Dorset
- ICT investment to facilitate improved access and shared services

Workforce

It is people who will make our plan happen, so it is essential that we recruit good people and develop them or commission services from our partners which may be more efficient or give greater resilience. Through our apprenticeship scheme we also want to equip local young people with skills, knowledge and confidence to gain future employment. People have the biggest influence on the quality of our service delivery and the attitudes, flexibility, skills and capability of our employees are critical to the improvement of the Council and delivery of customer focused public services. We also recognise that as we are a significant employer in the area we need to ensure that we understand and address the issues that will help us to remain competitive in the local labour market and an attractive employer of choice. Supporting young people to gain skills

We have been accredited for over 10 years with Investors in People and the enthusiastic qualities of our staff and our empowering 'can do' culture are recognised by our peers.

Our Workforce Development Strategy is consistent with good practice and focuses on pay and reward, recruitment and retention, skills development, leadership, efficiency and efficient structures, succession planning and talent management.

It is a key document for the Council which will help us to manage the business continuity risks that will arise over the next five years and also help us to identify and deliver transformational and efficiency gains. This opportunity for longer term thinking about future services over time will help us to have:

- A culture that engages and responds effectively to concerns raised by our communities
- A robust businesslike culture, ensuring that objectives and targets are reliably and consistently achieved and that poor performance decreases
- Effective project management so that projects fulfill their objectives and are delivered on time and to budget
- Good governance arrangements and a sound system of internal control giving confidence that corporate objectives and priorities are translated into effective action
- Fit for purpose management and staffing structure matched by effective performance appraisal in the context of a forward looking workforce development strategy

The Council will be reviewing its structure and the way that the services are delivered within the Council with a view to reducing management costs of the organisation and consolidating the skills and talent that the Council has in its employee workforce. We will deliver further learning programme to ensure that Members and staff have the necessary negotiation, influencing and management skills to commission and contract managed services in a mixed economy model. This will help the Council to make informed decisions about the services that it delivers and strengthen its position to meet the challenges in the future.

Focus

Vision and Dorset

The diagram sets out how we join up our plans with our partners so we have a thread which links the growth strategy to the work of each of our services and every employee.

Our **Vision** is a shared vision with our community partnerships.

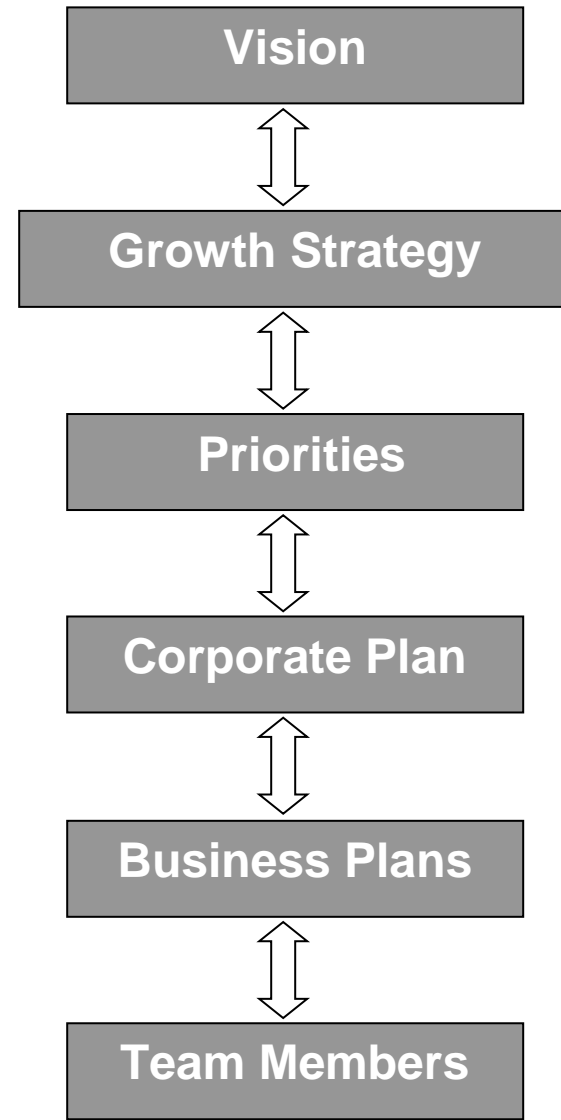
The **Growth Strategy for Dorset** - The Government has asked the Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership to develop a Strategic Economic Plan and Local Growth Fund Plan to support economic growth across the County. This will include plans for skills, housing and transport. *“The intention is to improve the performance of existing businesses in Dorset, whilst also encouraging the creation and growth of new ones. This will support a strongly performing, productive and sustainable economy characterised by boosting higher paid and better skilled jobs.”*

Priorities focus our resources on what we need to achieve.

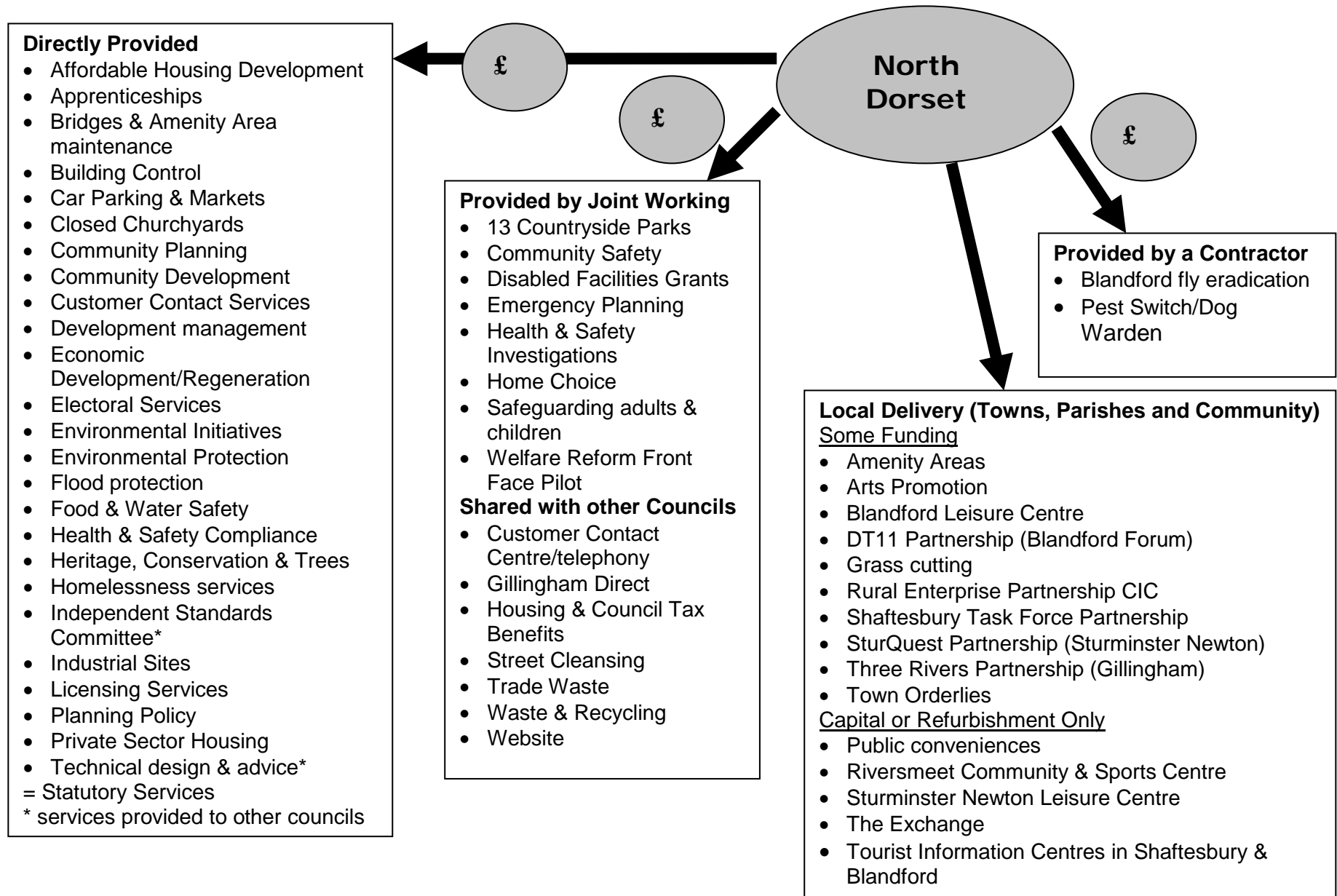
The **Corporate Plan** sets out the way in which the Council contributes to the longer term social, economic and environmental wellbeing of North Dorset. Statutory plans and strategies such as the Budget, Local Development Framework and Housing Strategy are developed to translate aims into specific targets and actions. These together form the Policy Framework for the Council.

Business Plans are produced annually to focus service delivery on outcomes required in the Corporate Plan.

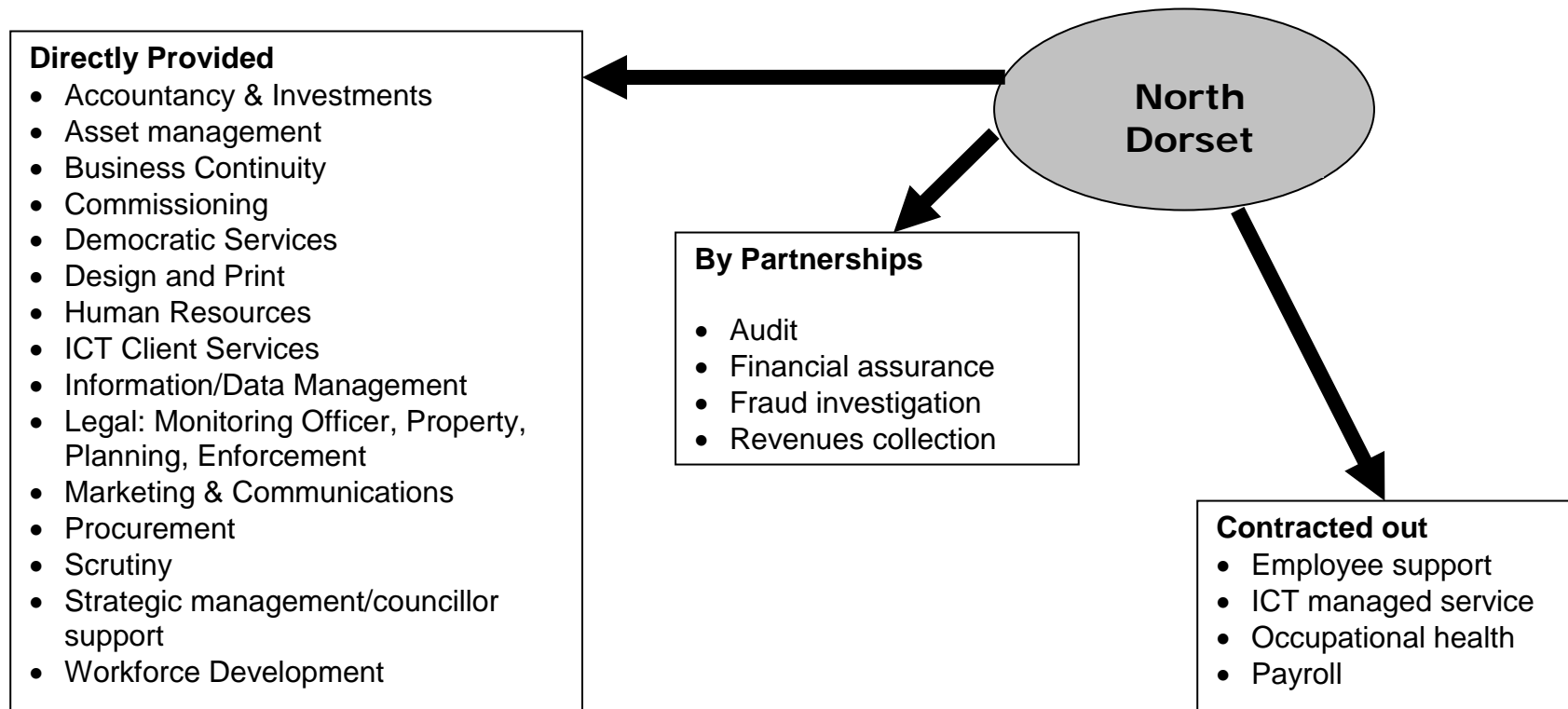
Team Members contribute to the Council’s vision, priorities and strategic plans through their own targets and individual performance review process. Each employee has a role in delivering the Sustainable Community Strategy.



Mixed Economy of Service Provision 2014 baseline



Mixed Economy of Business Infrastructure 2014 baseline



Monitor and Review

The Councils performance management framework enables partners and communities to hold the Council to account. Throughout the year these plans are regularly reviewed to report on progress so that the Council is aware how it is doing and where improvement is required. At the end of each year an Annual Report will be published which will summarise progress. The following arrangements are in place to ensure that Members, Senior Management Team and Partners receive timely and accurate information that will enable them actively to monitor and review the activity and results of the Council.

The Council is accountable for the overall performance of our services and approves the most important Council strategies, service plans and performance targets through the formal approval of the Corporate Plan update each year and the budget.

Cabinet sets the priorities and the individual projects. Each Cabinet Portfolio Holder has an allocated portfolio of services and activities for which they take responsibility. They also sign off relevant Service Business Plans and review performance information in relation to each service in their portfolio. Topic working groups are set up for specific important issues.

Strategic Delivery Committee is an internal cross party committee that is steering and monitoring the Council's change programme

Overview and Scrutiny Committees identify the areas of work that need to be scrutinised and initiate follow up work where they have concerns that performance is consistently below target. They also contribute towards strategy and policy development and carry out scrutiny reviews.

Accounts and Audit Committee oversees governance and the major risk areas for the Council and also identifies potential threats to the effective delivery of services and the achievement of our plans. The Audit Committee ensures the Council has adequate controls in place.

Team North Dorset is based on Area Panels and are a way of working to bring local decision making back into the heart of the community. They are a formal part of the way that Dorset County Council and North Dorset District Council, Dorset are working together with Town Council's and Community Partnerships to discuss and find solutions to local issues.

Joint Committees oversee partnership arrangements such as the Dorset Waste Partnership and Stour Valley Partnership with Poole.