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BUSINESS STRATEGY

2010 - 2015

helping communities help themselves

1. About this Strategy

The development of this Strategy was overseen by a Working Party appointed by the Community Council of Devon Board, supported by Community Council of Devon senior officers and, on a pro bono basis, by Annie Broadbent MICPD, a consultant on leadership and development.

We began in January 2009 by analysing the environment in which Community Council of Devon works, the changes taking place and those anticipated, and by seeking views of all those with an interest in Community Council of Devon. At the same time, particular attention was paid to identifying and clarifying the values with which Community Council of Devon works. All staff and trustees have been involved in this work.

We received a number of valuable comments on a consultation draft between December 2009 and February 2010. These came from user organisations, local and principal councils, and other Community Council of Devon members. This final version of the strategy reflects their insights.

Our Business strategy (section 6) includes headline aims and objectives. The Community Council of Devon Board agrees priorities, detailed budgets and work programmes related to each of those objectives on an annual basis.

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2. Vision & Mission

Community Council of Devon is the Rural Community Council for Devon and has particular expertise and experience in understanding and supporting rural communities.

Community Council of Devon's vision is of active communities shaping their own futures with improved opportunity and quality of life for all.

Community Council of Devon's mission is that we strive to make this happen through our direct work with communities, our local knowledge, networks, professional services, and our influencing role.

We summarise this in **Community Council of Devon's strapline**: 'helping communities help themselves'.

3. Values

We put our values at the heart of our business planning. These are listed below, together with a summary of what they mean in practice. From these values and our understanding of the context in which we are working, we have derived a 'success formula' for Community Council of Devon and this can be found in Section 5. Also in that section are the Key Performance Indicators by which we plan to measure our success as an organisation.

We value people

We will develop the strengths of people we work with. We will listen, provide opportunities for people to be heard, and encourage client feedback. We will champion equality and diversity. We will invest in and value our employees and volunteers.

We value community

We will work closely with communities, actively involving members in our organisation. We will continuously develop our local knowledge. We will champion the concept of active and inclusive communities, acting as honest brokers, and helping them to achieve positive change.

We value professionalism

We will work with transparency, honesty and integrity. We will be accountable, informed, and flexible. We will work efficiently, to recognised quality standards, in ways that demonstrate good governance and financial prudence.

We value environmental responsibility

We will promote environmental awareness and highlight good practice in sustainable development. We will work responsibly within Community Council of Devon and with communities to reduce adverse impacts on the environment. We will encourage initiatives that support healthy communities, and encourage people to socialise, shop and work locally.

We value good communication

We will provide clear and timely information. We will link communities together to share and develop good practice, and to amplify their voice. We will enable rural and community views to be heard within partnerships and networks. We will promote and maximise the use of appropriate technology.

4. Context

This section is in three parts. The first section focuses on our own organisation, the second analyses the external environment in which we work, and the final section is a review of our strengths and weaknesses and the opportunities and threats we perceive.

a) About Community Council of Devon itself

The Community Council of Devon (Community Council of Devon) is primarily a community development organisation, with a strong focus on rural communities, their needs and aspirations, and their institutions. For example, we have specialist staff working with community buildings such as village halls, and with parish councils. We also have a team focused on helping communities plan for their futures. And we have other expertise and programmes that adapt over time. In recent years we have run projects relating to community and rural enterprise, migrant workers, women's business development, climate change and community-based learning.

We manage and support grant programmes. We work in close liaison with public and voluntary bodies, and aim to see community and rural issues fully reflected in local and national policy and strategy.

i) History

Community Council of Devon is an independent charitable company founded in 1961. Our membership is diverse and includes statutory bodies, voluntary organisations, community groups and individual supporters from all over Devon.

Community Council of Devon is part of a network of 38 Rural Community Councils (RCCs) one in each county of England. They are all registered charities, set up to benefit rural communities. RCCs maintain close relations with national and local government. We are represented at a national level by ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England), and in the region by SWAN (the South West network of RCCs). SWAN has more than 10 years experience of successful collaborative work.

KEY ISSUES.

- Community Council of Devon's 50th anniversary will take place in 2011.
- Our profile, marketing and 'brand' awareness have been identified as areas to develop.
- Our national networks and partnerships are likely to be particularly critical over this period.
- We expect increasing collaboration and partnership working within these networks

ii) Governance and Membership

Community Council of Devon has a voluntary governing body, our Board of Trustees. The majority are elected by our full members at general meetings. The remainder are appointed by bodies as designated in our company articles. Community Council of Devon was incorporated as a company limited by guarantee in 1999.

Alongside our full and supporting members, all members of Devon Association of Parish Councils, Devon Association of Community Buildings, and Devon Playing Fields Association are affiliate members of Community Council of Devon.

KEY ISSUES.

- Growth and development of our membership
- A review of our governance
- The potential to further develop the Community Council of Devon Members Forum.

iii) Leadership and Management

The Board of Trustees delegates day to day running of Community Council of Devon to the Chief Executive. He is supported by a tier of senior operational managers who oversee the direct work with communities and its development (Assistant Chief Executive) and finance, personnel and support services (Resources Manager). The Chief Executive reaches retirement age during the period of this strategy.

KEY ISSUES.

- Management structures need reviewing and simplifying.
- Recent leadership training needs to be built on.
- A transition strategy is required for the Community Council of Devon Chief Executive who has led the Community Council of Devon staff team since 1997

iv) Staff

As at March 2010, Community Council of Devon employs 31 staff of whom a minority are full time. 12 of these staff are employed to deliver specific short term programmes. The full time equivalent is 22.3 posts. Staff retention is good for the voluntary sector - with 17 staff having worked at Community Council of Devon for over 2 years, and 10 of those for over 5 years.

Whenever possible Community Council of Devon recruits and develops trainee and apprentice staff, and works to retain skills within the organisation.

KEY ISSUES. We will refine our appraisal and recruitment processes.

- Our work with volunteers can be developed.
- A register of approved Community Council of Devon 'Associate' Professionals could extend our capability in a volatile period.

v) Quality Assurance

Community Council of Devon believes our most important asset is our staff. Community Council of Devon was recognised as an Investor in People in 2003 and this has been reviewed with highly favourable reports in 2006 and 2009. Community Council of Devon was the third Rural Community Council (RCC) to reach the highest level of quality accreditation for RCCs - ACRE quality standard level 3. The latter became Charity Commission approved in 2010. ACRE (Action for Communities in Rural England) is the national body representing RCCs.

KEY ISSUES.

- We plan for periodic reviews of both our ACRE quality standards and our Investors in People status.
- We will assess other relevant quality marks such as relevant ISO (International Organization for Standardization) standards

vi) Finance

Our income comes from a mix of contracts, service level agreements and grants. We also manage funds for dispersal to others. We are beginning to earn income from consultancy and research, and from universities and the private sector.

Financial support for the work of the organisation comes from local bodies such as Devon County Council, Devon's district, town & parish councils, and Dartmoor National Park. Community Council of Devon also receives support from trusts, foundations, the National Lottery and from Government and EU programmes.

KEY ISSUES.

- We will refine our funding strategy as we plan for a harsher economic climate.
- Income generation, especially of unrestricted income, will be critical.
- Asset development, such as owning our own office premises, could be an important step to financial sustainability.
- We will undertake a review of our investment strategy.

vii) Working environment

Community Council of Devon's office, whilst centrally located for the county, is not ideal in environmental or management terms. It is the Board's intention to review Community Council of Devon's office base in 2012. Community Council of Devon has invested in improved technology over recent years, but this is a field that develops rapidly. In particular the potential to support improved working practices and external communications and debate now require a step change. Environmental concerns are a factor in serving a large rural county with limited transport services.

KEY ISSUES

- Increasingly important is enhancing our use of information and communications networks and systems.
- We will need to focus on communications, including our website, and assess social networking opportunities.
- Improving office premises remains a priority.
- We will reduce our carbon footprint.

4b) About the external environment

The traditional image of the countryside is that it is stable and timeless. But the reality is that change is rapid and it is everywhere. Communities are under pressure from demographic change and inward migration. Livelihoods are under threat, and crises are more frequent.

But mixed communities provide a bastion against this upheaval. Neighbourliness, self-help and local organisation remain common, and rural communities in particular can provide a model of resilience and sustainable development for the wider community.

Looking further ahead is difficult, but the following sections summarise our understanding.

i) Political change

The 2010 general election is likely to influence strongly the period of this Business Strategy. But at the time of writing, political rhetoric is tending to overshadow substance. Critical issues for Community Council of Devon and rural communities are how the government views rural issues, the reality behind the rhetoric of involving and empowering communities, and the approach to the voluntary and community sector. Voluntary organisations and communities themselves are likely to take on more public service roles. This may be through both desire and necessity.

More locally, the March 2010 Government review of local government in Devon could create a new Devon with an entirely rural character and no large towns. At the time of writing it is quite unclear how a two tier local authority of this nature will function, or the challenges it will face.

ii) Environmental change

Our Devon environment is an asset of great value, but also under considerable threat. Prospects for farming are hard to gauge. Food surpluses are over, but the scarcity or expense of agricultural inputs may create a turbulent picture.

The prospect and impact of climate change will be increasingly important. This implies action on both mitigation and adaptation. In addition fuel poverty is affecting growing numbers of people.

Transport is now a critical environmental factor. The twin aspects are access (especially to services) and mobility. An increasing use of web-based communications can partly compensate for lack of access.

iii) Economic Change

The unprecedented global economic downturn of 2008-10 has an obvious long term impact on both businesses and jobs across Devon. Small businesses are crucial to the rural economy and the impact of the recession on this group (including on revenues and working hours) needs to be fully understood in policy making.

The Devon Economic Strategy has identified globalisation, technology, organisational change, knowledge economy, energy, climate change as the key economic drivers for Devon. The growth in the 'social economy' is marked and includes community-owned shops, community land trusts, etc.

The rural Devon economy features low wages and under-employment. There is a reliance on, tourism, social care, farming and part-time or seasonal jobs. Rural productivity lags well behind the national average, especially in the northern parts of Devon.

Deprivation across rural areas is largely neglected owing to the near universal use of indices which focus on areas rather than on people. The 'hidden' issue of rural deprivation needs highlighting, and the development of new kinds of responses.

iv) Technological Change

Information and communication technology (ICT) will provide new opportunities for rural and remote areas, provided there is a good broadband service. ICT supports home and remote working, and these have particular benefits in rural areas.

Potentially, technology provides an avenue to address access to services. And the digital revolution is leading to some fundamental changes in the way people find information and communicate, such as social networking. But access to fast broadband, computer ownership and

the necessary skills are by no means universal, and the most vulnerable people in rural communities may be unable to access important services without support.

v) Social Change

Current projections indicate a significantly increasing rural population, especially older people. Overall, levels of ill health compare favourably to the regional average, but access to health services remains a strong concern. A new rural health strategy, led by NHS Devon should help address this and similar issues.

Reliance on the private car is high, and many rural people face the prospect of not being able to access services and facilities unless they are provided locally. Young people have economic and social needs which are not being met. Affordable housing comes top of most town and village lists of pressing issues.

Already, over one-third of all parishes have engaged in Parish and Market Town Plans, involving 4,500 active volunteers. This 'social capital' can see communities through periods of crisis and upheaval, but needs nurturing and supporting.

Volunteer hours spent on supporting community buildings have been valued at over £5 million per annum. There is great potential for developing community buildings into multi-use centres. They can be equipped with the latest technology, and many are capable of providing an array of local and outreach services. These can help compensate for the continuing decline in private and statutory services.

vi) Stakeholder Feedback

Consultation with partner Associations, communities, and Community Council of Devon members has suggested Community Council of Devon should focus on the following:

- Providing technical and community development support to help communities achieve their aspirations
- Support for maintaining and improving facilities and services, including a transport system that serves the whole community
- Assisting collaborative working between parishes
- Technical advice around legislation and regulation
- Helping communities relate to important public agencies, and lobbying and influencing on their behalf
- A strong focus on the needs of both younger and older people
- Networking, the sharing of bright ideas and of learning
- Clear communication of Community Council of Devon support and services

Further comments arose from consultation with key partners, including:

- Community Council of Devon will be increasingly operating in an environment of limited resources, and all organisations need to find better ways of delivering together
- Community Council of Devon's focus should be clearly driven by its vision and focus on areas of particular expertise, including capacity building and technical support
- Community Council of Devon should help build local community 'resilience', through communities developing themselves
- Community Council of Devon can have a powerful voice on behalf of rural communities, and should ensure that local policies and programmes are checked for their impact on the rural population.

Finally we received a number of responses to our Consultation Draft between December 2009 and February 2010. There was generally strong support for our analysis and our approach. And there were also valuable insights and suggestions, which have influenced this final version of our Strategy document.

vii) Analysis of our 'Sector'

Most of Community Council of Devon's relationships are with other agencies at the Devon level. However, significant relationships also exist at regional and national levels. Community Council of Devon is supported by a broad range of funders, although statutory sources – primarily local and national government – remain the most significant contributors.

Current expectations are for public sector spending to fall significantly during the period of this business strategy. This apparent threat could also provide new opportunities (see section 4c below) Public funding is moving away from a 'grant giving' culture and towards procurement of services. Community Council of Devon has traditionally received investment from charitable Trusts and Lottery funds. However, this is often narrowly targeted, reducing opportunities to address rural issues. As overall levels of funding fall, it is likely that such opportunities will become more limited.

There is increasing expectation of a 'partnership model' in planning and service delivery. As well as collaboration, there is potential for competition with other voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations, particularly as resources become scarcer. The same is true for a range of private sector organisations. Community Council of Devon has a history of delivering services in partnership with public sector organisations (particularly local government) and joint working with partners in other VCS sector organisations.

4c) Our Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT)

Strengths

- Flexible organisation that embraces change
- Skilled, adaptable and committed staff
- Strong leadership and a stable staffing structure
- Proven track-record in delivery
- 50 years experience and a positive reputation
- Long established links and networks within rural communities
- A great understanding of rural and community issues
- Influential as an honest broker, with strong links to partnerships
- Strong regional and national networks
- Demonstrable quality standards and good relationships with customers
- Good governance and sound financial management
- Diverse range of interests and areas of influence

Weaknesses

- Relatively small staff team covering many work areas
- Difficulties in maintaining direct contact with increasingly active communities
- Not fully equipped to respond to all opportunities, eg consultancy and procurement
- Finite resources could become stretched by increased demand
- Specialist knowledge often lodged with individuals
- Could improve celebrating success and disseminating good practice
- Need clarity of message, better marketing, and clearer communication

- Premises not entirely fit for purpose
- Funding base is not diverse enough, and relies significantly on short-term 'grant' income
- Research and information gathering role could be further developed

Opportunities

- 'Out-sourcing' of some public service delivery should lead to new openings for our sector
- Political changes at local and national levels will bring new priorities
- Increasing interest in 'community' and community-led solutions from politicians and policy makers
- Changes across the voluntary sector in a time of economic uncertainty, could create opportunities
- Strong partnerships at local, regional and national levels on which Community Council of Devon can build
- The potential for information technology to be used in a transformative way that transforms both Community Council of Devon's own work practices, and rural community development
- Emerging and developing themes, such as environment / climate change and technology
- Policy makers and funders respond positively to evidence on full extent of deprivation and disadvantage within rural Devon

Threats

- Public sector spending cuts, economic downturn, and political change will result in reduced spending
- Local government changes could disadvantage communities and the agencies that provide their services
- Local and national political changes could accelerate a shift of policy and funding away from rural communities
- Ever greater competition (from both the VCS and private sectors) for more scarce resources, particularly driven by the public service procurement agenda
- Policy makers and funders switch support away from umbrella bodies serving the VCS to direct service delivery
- Growing external demands from funders, partners, and legislative changes

5. Success for Community Council of Devon

This section is a new development for Community Council of Devon. We identify below the principal factors that contribute to the success of the organisation. These success factors link back to our statement of values in section 3. They allow us to develop performance indicators which apply right across Community Council of Devon's work.

5a) Our Success Formula

We are successful because:

- **We work closely with and understand rural communities**
- **We are well positioned to champion rural issues**

- We are flexible and dynamic in responding to community needs
- We have strong leadership and highly motivated staff
- We are professional and provide high quality services
- We collaborate and work well with others
- We promote good ideas and innovation and celebrate success

5b) Our Performance Indicators

These indicators have been set to stand for the full five years of the Business Strategy with performance measured on an annual basis. The Community Council of Devon Board will determine the numerical targets and how these are to be measured. As these are entirely new for Community Council of Devon, the indicators themselves will be reviewed at the end of the first year.

- **Customer/Stakeholder Satisfaction**

Community Council of Devon will measure the satisfaction of all its stakeholder groups - service users, members, staff and Trustees, partners and client/funders.

- **Communication interventions increasing awareness of issues facing rural communities and the role of Community Council of Devon.**

Where an 'intervention' is either an action or a 'campaign' undertaken both in terms of services delivered e.g. rural proofing, technical assistance, press campaigns on service achievements etc. and in the management of service delivery e.g. production of new Community Council of Devon literature.

- **Service improvements/innovations**

This includes both new project development and significant improvements to existing services.

- **Improvement in stakeholder involvement**

Community Council of Devon will seek to improve the involvement of all its stakeholders - service users, members, staff, partners and clients/funders in the management and delivery of its work. This will include representation in the Community Council of Devon governance/membership infrastructure, partnership working and consultation.

For year 2 onwards

Community Council of Devon will use the following indicator as an output measurement of Business activity:

- **Increase in 'take-up' of Community Council of Devon services**

Community Council of Devon forecasts that the impact of delivering its Business strategy will be an increase in the take up of services across its customer bases - service users, members, partners and clients/funders through improving access to services to non-traditional customers, developing more efficient methods of service delivery e.g. the website, and developing activities of relevance to new customers.

6. Our Aims and Objectives

This section is in three parts. The first section describes our direct work with communities and our influencing work on their behalf. The second deals with our approach to service delivery. And the third addresses the resources that underpin our work.

Below we list our Aims and Objectives. Against these we will set targets and identify action plans, typically covering two years. These latter are for internal use and are reviewed annually by the Community Council of Devon Board.

6a) Our Work with Communities

Statement on our Work with Communities

We will support communities in responding to their needs and aspirations. We will enable communities to take a leading role in developing local solutions. Our primary focus is on rural communities.

We work responsibly, mindful of environmental impacts and we believe in equal opportunity for all. We work in partnership, and we develop and highlight best practice. We aim to influence policy and programmes that affect rural communities, using our evidence, experience and long standing networks.

1. Encouraging Enterprise and Innovation

Aim

To enable communities to develop innovative and enterprising approaches which solve rural problems, provide local services, and improve the quality of community life.

Objectives

- i. **Enterprise for All:** To support rural residents who face barriers to participating in work, by promoting entrepreneurship and by providing access to appropriate support and advice.
- ii. **Social Enterprise:** To support voluntary groups in developing an enterprising approach, and to work with communities to retain or develop local businesses and services.
- iii. **Community Learning:** To work with communities in order to bring opportunities for learning and development of skills within range of rural residents.

2. Improving Services and Facilities

Aim

To ensure that the needs and aspirations of people living in rural communities are met through access to a wide range of services and fit-for-purpose facilities.

Objectives

- i. **Community Facilities:** To ensure that community buildings and public open spaces are well used, well run, and valued by the whole community, and have a significant impact on quality of life within the community.
- ii. **Access to local services:** To work with communities and service providers to enable local access to a wide and appropriate range of services, including those managed by the community themselves.
- iii. **Transport:** To encourage communities to develop local transport solutions to ensure that people can get to a comprehensive range of services from education and health to employment and leisure.

3. Championing Inclusion and Challenging Disadvantage

Aim

To ensure that every resident is able to fully participate in rural community life. To highlight barriers faced by communities, families and individuals - including lack of affordable housing - and develop local strategies and actions to address these.

Objectives

- i. **Social Inclusion (disadvantaged groups):** To identify barriers which prevent particular groups from actively engaging in work and community life; and to work with communities to develop solutions that overcome them. We will take initiatives to support marginalised groups.
- ii. **Social Inclusion (Community Council of Devon's own services):** To ensure that all of Community Council of Devon's services pro-actively address disadvantage.
- iii. **Affordable Housing:** With partners, to enable and help realise a range of affordable housing options for people living within rural communities who cannot access open market housing.

4. Promoting Democracy and Participation

Aim

To support communities in working together for a healthy democratic system, encouraging people to take an active part in community life.

Objectives

- i. **Local Councils:** To help town and parish councils to serve their communities in a professional, knowledgeable and caring way, so they can achieve the best outcomes for their areas.

- ii. **Community led planning:** To support communities to create inclusive, locally-led plans, to implement their plans and to refresh them; and to champion their importance to the development of district and county strategies.
- iii. **Voluntary Groups:** To encourage and develop the contribution made by volunteers and voluntary and community activity throughout the county.

5. Caring for our Environment

Aim

To support communities in valuing and enhancing our environment, taking action to mitigate the impact of climate change, and maximise the sustainable use of natural resources.

Objectives

- i. **Climate Change:** In the face of anticipated climate change, to encourage activity on mitigation and adaptation, including through our own community projects and programmes.
- ii. **Environment Planning:** To promote the use of community-led planning to develop active responses to environmental concerns and pressures, from biodiversity to greener community buildings.
- iii. **Natural Resources:** To encourage the responsible use of natural resources in order to reduce environmental impact, whilst also supporting local business and enhancing community spirit.

6b) Delivering our Services

Our Service Delivery Statement

Our business will be well managed and our service delivery customer focused. We will be responsible and responsive, and will continuously improve the quality of our services. We will communicate strongly and clearly.

6. Service Delivery

Aim

To provide a high quality service, taking account of the needs of all our customers

Objectives

- i. To deliver high quality services which are continuously reviewed.
- ii. To ensure that our service delivery responds to the identified needs of our users
- iii. To maintain excellent relationships with key stakeholders and networks

7. Managing Our Operations

Aim

To be a well run, well managed, and highly effective organisation.

Objectives

- i. To ensure that our management and staffing structures are efficient, effective, and able to respond to all challenges.
- ii. To make sure that all Community Council of Devon policies, procedures and practices are compliant with legislative requirements and reflect good practice.
- iii. To plan our work to ensure that the capabilities and aspirations of staff meet the requirements of the organisation.

8. Marketing and Communications

Aim

To provide a clear, consistent and positive message about our services, values, quality and professionalism, and to improve awareness of Community Council of Devon and of issues affecting rural communities.

Objectives

- i. To make sure that our internal communications operate as efficiently as possible in support of the delivery of our business.
- ii. To communicate clearly, consistently and without jargon to all our service users, partners and customers.
- iii. To improve awareness and understanding of Community Council of Devon and of issues that face Devon's rural communities

6c) Our Resources

Our Resources Statement

We will manage Community Council of Devon's financial, human, technological and physical resources to enable effective delivery of our services.

9. Governance

Aim

To be a model of good governance, with the Board leading Community Council of Devon strategically, and with Trustees and the wider membership promoting Community Council of Devon and participating in relevant aspects of the organisation's work.

Objectives

- i. To actively promote membership of Community Council of Devon and its affiliated bodies

- ii. To ensure that the Community Council of Devon Board and Committees are dynamic, broadly-based, and are representative of Community Council of Devon members and rural Devon

10. Personnel

Aim

To ensure that staff and volunteers are appropriately qualified and experienced, highly motivated, and supported in developing their individual and team roles.

Objectives

- i. To take an integrated approach to staff development, from recruitment, through induction to appraisal and through to professional and personal development
- ii. To encourage the use of volunteers and explore the use of professional Community Council of Devon 'Associates'
- iii. To retain and develop our staff team through flexible working, family friendly policies, and, where appropriate, internal promotion

11. Finance

Aim

To be fully accountable, manage our financial resources efficiently, and use them to deliver effective services

Objectives

- i. To manage our financial resources professionally and prudently, with transparency in all our reporting
- ii. To ensure compliance with Charity Commission, Companies House and all legislative requirements
- iii. To regularly revise our fundraising strategy broadening our income streams

12. Infrastructure

Aim

To maintain and develop the operational capabilities of the organisation, reviewing and upgrading our physical and technological resources.

Objectives

- i. To provide a working environment that is physically and geographically appropriate for Community Council of Devon's office requirements
- ii. To regularly review alternative ways of working, including those that reduce our carbon footprint

- iii. To make increasingly effective use of information and communications technology to assist in delivering our services

7. Risk

Since 2002, Community Council of Devon's Board of Trustees has assessed risk to Community Council of Devon on an annual basis. Additionally risk assessments are carried out on specific projects and programmes as they arise. Our risk policy is also reviewed annually .

Community Council of Devon's risk policy states: Community Council of Devon recognises that risk is an inherent feature of all activity and may arise from inaction as well as new initiatives. Community Council of Devon will undertake assessment of risk for new projects and programmes as they develop, and an annual risk review to establish its risk profile and assess current threats and opportunities.

This Strategic Business Strategy outlines objectives and actions that will actively minimise likely areas of risk in the areas of governance and management, operations and compliance.

This strategy also identifies through the 'SWOT' analysis (section 4c), the key risks or threats arising from external factors faced by Community Council of Devon over the next period and has developed objectives and actions to minimise these.

These include risks caused by the following:

- Economic prospects and public funding cuts
- Dependency on grant funding
- Changes in Government priorities and policies
- Environmental challenges including climate change
- Loss of key Community Council of Devon staff

With the following indicative objectives/actions:

- Improving Community Council of Devon's public relations and influencing role
- More effective use of information and communications technology
- Development of a fundraising strategy

8. Continuous Improvement

Community Council of Devon commits to a process of continuous monitoring, reviewing, evaluation and improvement of our services and practices. This is to ensure that the services we deliver, and the way we run our organisation, is as efficient and effective as possible, whilst responding to the needs and demands of our customers and wider stakeholders.

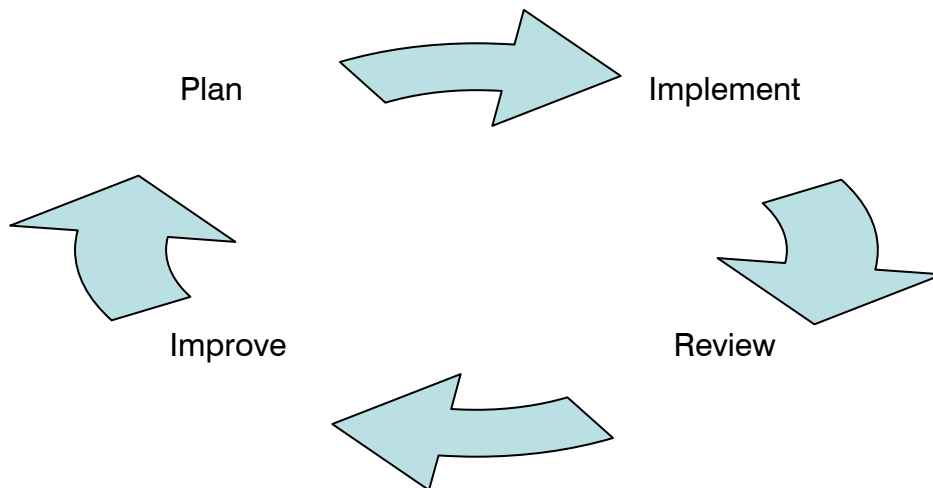
Aims and Objectives

Within this strategic plan we have identified our vision, aims and objectives. Against these we have set targets and identified action plans. Key Performance Indicators and work programme targets are set typically for two years. The latter are included in appendices to this plan and are for internal use and reviewed annually.

New to this strategy is the concept of a success formula (section 5). The key performance indicators here provide an over-arching, team based approach to continuous improvement.

The Board monitors progress against all business plan targets on an annual or quarterly basis, with accountability sitting with the Chief Executive. This monitoring is in addition to specific reporting requirements set by funders and partners. Individual Trustees link to internal and external work areas to enable the Board to have a full understanding of all of Community Council of Devon's activities. This process of review and evaluation helps inform future actions and developments.

We aim for a virtuous circle:



Service Delivery

We will regularly assess and review the delivery of our services, seeking direct feedback from customers through bespoke evaluation, and processes such as customer questionnaires and surveys. We will maintain and develop direct representation from our members through mechanisms such as our Members Forum, and increasing use of our web presence. A major review of our customer services is under way as this Strategy document is being completed.

We will review, assess and develop the quality of our services and practices through engagement in quality standard processes. These currently include Investors in people (due for review in 2012), and ACRE Quality Standards, now recognised by the Charity Commission. As stated earlier we will also investigate whether other quality marks are relevant such as ISO 9001.

End

A number of appendices are associated with this document. These are for internal Community Council of Devon use.

*External Delivery Strategy - 2 Year Targets and Action Plan
Financial Projections - 2 Years
Operating Environment Analysis in detail
Stakeholder Feedback in detail
Sector Analysis in detail*

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