



THE IVERS

PARISH COUNCIL

45B High Street, Iver, Buckinghamshire, SL0 9ND
www.iversparishcouncil.gov.uk

Agenda Item	10.1
Meeting Date	Full Council – 16 December 2024
Report Title	Preparations for 2025-2029 Term
Recommendation/s	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. To commission Council HR & Governance Support to assist with the preparation of a Strategic Plan, accepting parts 1, 2, 3 and 5 of the quote, bringing the total cost to £40002. To not pursue part 4 of the quote (consultation process) and deliver this aspect in-house with the Clerk & RFO facilitating the consultation process3. To commission Mulberry Local Authority Services to deliver an all-councillor training session and mock meeting exercise at a cost of £8454. To create a '2025-29 Council Preparations' earmarked reserve of £5000, to be vired from the Neighbourhood Plan budget which currently totals £20,000
Appendices to Report	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. CHRGS Strategic Plan Quote Proposal2. Email from Mulberry LAS with Quote Proposal for Training Session
Prepared By	Shaun Fishenden PSLCC – Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer
Detailed Information	
<p style="text-align: center;">Strategic Plan</p> <p>It is acknowledged that the current council term is hindered by a lack of an agreed set of aims and objectives that would set the vision for the Council. This has a direct impact on officers too, as they cannot plan their workstreams and operational priorities effectively without clear strategic direction from the Council.</p> <p>Considering this, the Clerk & RFO is recommending that from the new council term commencing in May 2025, preparations are made to produce a Strategic Plan. A quote has been sought from our newly appointed HR provider, Council HR & Governance Support, who can also offer assistance in this area.</p> <p>The benefits of engaging an independent consultant are as follows:</p>	

- Engagement with best practice in the sector
- Independent perspective, with no knowledge of inter-councillor disagreements
- Does not constrain in-house officer resourcing

The process for producing the Strategic Plan will be as follows:

1 st May 2025	Elections held
By end of May 2025	Cllr Questionnaire issued by consultant
By end of June 2025	All-Cllr Training Day & Visioning Day held
June 2025	Consultant to produce post Visioning Day report
June-July 2025	Public Consultation facilitated by officers
Aug 2025	Consultant to draft plan based on Visioning Day report and public consultation feedback, for presentation to September meeting
Sept 2025	Adoption of Strategic Plan

All-Councillor Training Session

Officers also believe given the likelihood of new councillors joining the Council from May 2025, and that it is best practice for returning councillors to undergo a refresher in their knowledge, that it would be wise to hold an All-Councillor Training Day.

This would cover the following aspects:

- Roles and Responsibilities of Councillors & Officers
- Powers and Duties of Parish Councils
- Agenda and Minutes

There would then be a 'mock council meeting' in the afternoon part of the session, to give participants a chance to see how a council meeting should operate and also give those who are interested in taking a Chair role to experience chairing a meeting.

A quote has been sought from Mulberry Local Authority Services to provide this training session. This would be delivered by Andy Beams. Mulberry LAS are experienced in delivering these types of training session. It is the Clerk's professional opinion that the benefits of having an all-council session will be that everyone will receive the same level of knowledge, and it can be an opportunity to discuss any queries people have around process and procedures.

Use of Neighbourhood Plan Budget

It is recommended that £5,000 is vired from the Neighbourhood Plan budget which currently totals £20,000. The reason for this is because there has been limited progress with making any further amendments to the Plan and in addition, the likelihood of completing this work before the end of the council term is low.

Therefore this virement is recommended, which would still leave £15,000 being transferred to the Neighbourhood Plan earmarked reserve at the end of the financial year.

Key Implications

Financial	There will be a financial implication of £4850 to be drawn from the Neighbourhood Plan budget.
Legislative and Policy	Adopting these recommendations will strengthen the Council's policy framework by underpinning it with a Strategic Plan.
Equality Assessment	It will be important that in the delivery of the training, and the strategic plan draft consultation that accessibility requirements are considered in terms of venue hire, and also the production of consultation documents e.g. providing large print materials where necessary.
Net Zero	There are no Net Zero implications

Strategic Planning Options

At Council HR & Governance Support (CHRGs) we have a number of experts, see [Appendix 1](#), available to support the Council in the development of its strategic plan. Developing a strategy is fundamental to a Council achieving agreed objectives, success and the trust of its local community. In turn the Strategy enables the Council to set meaningful and relevant objectives for officers to deliver as part of the Councils performance management strategy, CHRGs can supply bespoke local council performance management systems as part of its ongoing HR & Governance support programme.

1 Councillor and Officer Questionnaire

A bespoke questionnaire is developed to secure a clear understanding of the priorities for the Town through the Town Council in full consultation with the appointed contact. This is then circulated to all Councillors and staff for evidence gathering. CHRGs would receive and collate all the data ready for a visioning day with Councillors and employees to ensure buy in from all parties and to support the building of a team ethic.

Estimated time to develop and collate all data **1.5 days at £400 per day = £600**

2 Visioning Day

To be held preferably on a Saturday to secure maximum attendance. A selected consultant would attend on site to work with Councillors and Officers to gather evidence for the strategic plan. At the visioning day we will explain the benefits of a strategic plan and how to ensure it is successful, which would for example include developing themed areas with SMART objectives within each area.

From the visioning day we would gather enough evidence to draft a report directing the draft objectives and themes for a strategic plan.

Time to develop slides and information for the visioning day and for consultant to attend on site for the day is **£600** (plus reasonable expenses to attend agreed in advance).

“I thoroughly enjoyed the Visioning Day.

What an extremely useful process.

I hope it becomes part of the culture of HTC.

Councillor Karen Nicholls, Hailsham Town Council

3 To prepare a report with the conclusions of the visioning day for the Council to consider

Following the visioning day, we would provide a report detailing the findings of the visioning day and summarising the conclusions reached during the day. We would be happy to present the report to the Councillors either in person or virtually.

Time to develop concluding report **3 days at £400 = £1,200**

Attendance at Council meeting virtually **£150**, or in person **£400** plus reasonable expenses.

4 Consulting with the public

The Council should reach out to the public to secure feedback and buy in to any strategy the Council may wish to progress. This can be undertaken at one of various stages or multiple stages. This could take several formats including consultation days, online questionnaires, questionnaires circulated locally and public meetings. We can provide advice on what works well and how to go about this consultation. If we are required to support the consultation process this would be charged at **£400 per day** or we can provide advice on support on how to conduct the consultation which would not take so much of our time so would be at a limited cost.

5 Composing a clear and concise strategic plan

It is important that a strategic plan is useable and not one that simply sits on a shelf. We would therefore develop a concise strategic plan with a clear list of SMART objectives, including time frames, lead officers and resource requirements.

Time to develop **4 days at £400 = £1600**

The Council can choose to utilise the expertise of CHRGS to do all or any combination of the above elements of developing a Strategic Plan.

We would be more than happy to discuss amendments if the Council would prefer a bespoke approach. Equally we are confident the above system does work from previous experience.

For further details or to book an appointment to discuss our services please email support@chrgs.co.uk

Or call James Corrigan – 07805 472859

[Council consultancy | Council HR and Governance Support](#)

Personal profile James Corrigan

James has been the head of paid service at three large pioneering and innovative Town Councils over a period of 22 years prior to which he was a practicing Local Government lawyer for 11 years as well as a part time Parish Clerk for eight years. A leader who enables individual and team building and development to ensure the best possible service.

Since 2021 James has been the Director of Councils HR and Governance Support where together with the ever-growing team, he provides HR and Governance advice to over 100 client Councils as well as delivering projects such as Organisational Reviews, investigations, recruitment and disciplinarys including settlement agreements.

James was a National Advisor (part-time) for the Society of Local Council Clerks for 10 years giving primarily HR advice to Clerks / Councils and was a trained evaluator of posts in accordance with the 2004 National Agreement. Building on this he qualified as a full member of the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development. Achieving many HR successes including leading the first Council in the Country (of any size) to complete single status, first Town Council to secure Investors in People and supporting two Modern Apprentices to win national awards. He uniquely now provides qualified HR support to Councils as a highly experienced former Town Clerk and Local Government Lawyer.

During his time as a Town Clerk / Chief Executive notable successes were achieved including.

- Winner of National Council of the Year
- First Council in the Country to achieve Investors in People status.
- First Council in the Country to complete single status review.
- First Local Council to be awarded 5 Green Flag Awards
- Secured in excess of £3 million in grants over a four-year period.
- Winner of Princes Trust award for services to youth
- Developing business plans resulting in the biggest grossing commercial income Town Council in the Country at over £1.7 million per annum
- Developing large capital projects including £2 million football Academy and £1.6 million restaurant and golf venue
- Re-designed a medium-sized Town Council from a one with 12 employees and a budgeted income of £950, 000 to a large Town Council with 48 employees and a budgeted income of in excess of £2.4 million.

Facilities and operations that have been managed include.

- Restaurant and events venues generating in excess of £550,000 per annum revenue income.
- Theatre, restaurant and café facility generating in excess of £500,000 income.
- Award winning golf course running at an annual profit of over £100,000 per annum.

- A large youth football academy including 10 pitches, café and changing facility.
- Numerous events some attracting over 10,000 visitors.
- A vibrant profitable seafront including all cafes and concessions as well as beach huts and art features.

Whilst working in County Durham James was commissioned by Durham County Council to develop part of their bid for Unitary Status. This included the development of their community plan via Parish and Town Councils and as a result securing funding on a permanent basis for a County Association from the County Unitary. Also involved in the Unitary development of Hartlepool Borough Council in 1996 as part of his post graduate management degree.

Whilst working full time as a Town Clerk / Chief Executive James also undertook ad hoc work for other Local Councils including delivering training, HR advice, recruitment and Council reviews. Also employed by County Associations to deliver training on their behalf, primarily Durham and Sussex & Surrey CALC's but including Hertfordshire and Cumbria.

A member of the board of the fledgling professional arm of the SLCC and was an active member of the NALC Larger Councils Committee.

Holder of three professional qualifications, a qualified Chartered Lawyer, Chartered Manager, and Chartered HR CIPD professional, also holds CILCA.

Now a full-time Consultant working in the Council sector providing advice and support in HR, Governance, Business Planning, Project development, visioning, and efficiency reviews. He is the only consultant in the sector with extensive experience as a Town Clerk whilst also being CIPD qualified.

James has been involved with over 100 Local Councils as a consultant undertaking various aspects of work including ongoing HR and governance support, organisational reviews, job evaluation, training, visioning days, redundancies, organising settlement agreements and investigations.

James Corrigan

CMgr FCMI, FCILEx., Chartered MCIPD, DMS, PG Dip HR, PG Dip L&SM

jamescorrigan@chrgs.co.uk

07805 472859

Recent testimonials James Corrigan

Councillor Peter Atkinson

Ferryhill Town Council

“James has a great work ethic and a vast experience in Local Government workings. He also easily adjusts to any given situation or business problem. James is always willing to help others and goes that extra mile to achieve goals. A pleasure to have worked with him and I have no hesitation recommending him to potential clients and businesses.”

Emma Payne PSLCC BA Hons

Town Clerk at Stotfold Town Council

“James is the epitome of a seasoned local government professional. He provides creative assistance and counsel on a range of topics within HR and governance. His profound expertise, acquired through years of involvement in local government, remains applicable and fitting. I have engaged his services multiple times to deliberate upon potentially challenging situations, and he consistently devises pragmatic approaches to address the matters.”

Gareth Davies

Town Clerk Hexham

“Getting James on board as our strategic HR advisor was, in retrospect, a great decision - he's clear sighted, well informed, experienced and easy to work with. Getting James on board as our strategic HR advisor was, in retrospect, a great decision - he's clear sighted, well informed, experienced and easy to work with.”

Belina Boyer FSLCC

Parish Clerk

“James Corrigan and Council HR and Governance Support completed a re-evaluation of all council posts as well as a separate organisational review for us. His insight into the local council sector shone through in all our conversations. His knowledge and expertise meant that both staff and Councillors trusted and respected his judgement, even if not always palatable. James's assessments were clear, honest and authoritative. It was most valuable to have an external agency carrying out the reviews. Having James and his team undertaking the reviews avoided numerous sources of conflict within the team and between staff and Council. James Corrigan and Council HR and Governance Support completed a re-evaluation of all council posts as well as a separate organisational review for us. His insight into the local council sector shone through in all our conversations. His knowledge and expertise meant that both staff and Councillors trusted and respected his judgement, even if not always palatable. James's assessments were clear, honest and authoritative.”

Personal profile

Peter Finnis

Peter has been a corporate chief officer for two large borough/district councils (Eastbourne Borough and Lewes District), culminating in a local government career of 40 years continuous service. He holds a professional qualification in public administration from Brighton University. He took early retirement in October 2020 and is now a part-time Consultant working in the Council sector providing training, advice and support, primarily in Governance, Democracy, Standards and Organisational Reviews, as well as conducting independent formal investigations.

Peter's main professional specialisms are in local democracy and corporate governance, and he has extensive experience in training and developing elected members and staff in these areas. As a former Statutory Monitoring Officer and Clerk to the Council, Peter's knowledge of the democratic process and constitutional lawfulness is extremely broad. An experienced leader of teams and individuals, Peter places great importance on coaching and developing others to enable them to succeed and prosper, thus delivering the best possible service. He has been the lead officer in conducting all elections in the localities for many years.

Peter has a passion for creating innovative projects that directly benefit local communities. In 2007, he created and introduced the country's first local authority devolved ward budget scheme which allowed local Councillors to fund hundreds of community projects and improvements in their areas. Similar schemes have now appeared around the country and many approached Peter for guidance in advance of their creation.

Following his early retirement in 2020, he became a CIC Board Director for Volunteers Network in Eastbourne and helped create the town's first community larder with the objectives of combatting both poverty and food waste. This was hugely successful and, again, led to the subsequent creation of other similar schemes, particularly in areas of high deprivation. This work was recognized nationally and led to the Volunteers Network being honoured with the Queens Award for Voluntary Services in 2022.

Peter has been a lead figure in a number of major organisational, political and strategic reviews and re-organisations. In the lead up to the last major local government review, which introduced Cabinet style systems in 2000, Peter pre-empted the legislation by a year to introduce a pilot in Eastbourne and constructed a whole new constitution around it. This was such a success that, when the subsequent national legislation was formally introduced, nonsignificant changes to the Eastbourne model were required.

He has taken the lead in implementing two major district council organisational reviews and, in 2011, won for Eastbourne the overall South-East Council of the Year IESE award for the transformation of Eastbourne Borough Council just two years after it was ranked bottom of the league by the Audit Commission.

In 2015, Peter was a lead officer in merging the workforces of Eastbourne and Lewes, introducing the innovative 'customer first' form of agile working to create a single workforce

serving two authorities covering much of East Sussex with a population totaling over 200,000.

In addition to all the above, Peter was a District Council chief officer for many other central service areas, including Corporate Planning, Emergency Planning, Human Resources, Legal Services, Press and Public Relations, and Strategic Development. As such, he was always seen as a key advisor to the Chief Executive and Council Leaders. As Monitoring Officer, Peter had the autonomous role in upholding standards and ethics and, due to his open style and extensive knowledge, he was always seen as a fair and trusted colleague and advisor by all the Councillors he worked with.

As an associate for Council HR and Governance Support Peter has used his expertise to provide training to Local Councils in areas such as Chairmanship, code of conduct and member officer relationships. He has also acted as a Locum Town Clerk, most recently at Midsomer Town Council.

Peter's style is to be open and friendly but also firm in identifying problems and issues. He enjoys providing innovative solutions, always focusing on the desired outcome.

Recent Testimonial

"Peter Finnis joined Midsomer Norton Town Council at a challenging time. The Council's Locum Clerk was moving on after six months with the Office staff-base consisting of just a single part-time employee. In addition, the recent local elections had seen a large turnover of Councillors with seven members elected for the first time. The first priority for the Council was to secure a stable and effective staffing structure. Peter's experience was invaluable in directing the Council's limited resources in the most effective way by using external HR and Governance Consultants to guide and manage the entire process of recruitment. This quickly returned favourable results with top quality candidates coming forward and leading to the appointment of two permanent members of staff.

With the Council consisting of so many members new to the field of local government, in addition to providing Councillors with ongoing day-to-day support (in his role as Locum Clerk), Peter also delivered a bespoke training session, tailored to the Council's specific needs, which helped new and existing members to understand their roles in the Town Council and the Council's role within the national democratic framework. Peter has worked effectively with Councillors and staff and leaves Midsomer Norton Town Council in a very strong, positive position going forward."

Councillor Gordon Mackay, Mayor Midsomer Norton Town Council

David Ashlee

PROFILE

An experienced strategic and operational manager. Having over 25 years' experience of senior management in local government (the past 16 as a chief executive), David has a wide range of skills that enable him to effectively manage complex organisations. Committed to excellent service delivery, David understands the importance of efficiency and has developed a good track record of continuous service improvement.

MANAGEMENT / LEADERSHIP STYLE

David has developed a strong leadership style and is confident in setting out a clear organisational direction. His facilitative management style enables him to gain trust and loyalty amongst his workforce and the confidence of his Councillors. Politically astute, David is able to provide clear and consistent advice and has a particular ability to simplify complex issues and plot clear strategies to overcome difficult situations.

AREAS OF SPECIALISATION

David specialises in understanding organisational dynamics. Experienced in managing change, David has overseen considerable growth within his previous organisation as well as developing new and improved governance arrangements. In addition, David specialises in resource management, be that human, physical or financial resources and has a strong track record of developing productive working arrangements with external partners.

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE

David has worked for 3 different local authorities in the principal and town and parish sectors. Since beginning his career in 1986, David has worked at many different organisational levels covering a range of different services and functions including strategic and policy roles and commercial / direct delivery roles. Overall, David has 37 years' experience. David was seconded to the Audit Commission in 2002 to carry out Best Value and CPA inspections at two different local authorities (district and metropolitan councils) and was also the lead peer reviewer for the first ever peer review carried out in the town and parish sector of local government working with both the Local Government Association and the National Association of Local Councils. He has now successfully completed a number of various commissions as an associate consultant with Council HR and Governance Support.

QUALIFICATIONS AND TRAINING

David has a Master's Degree in Strategic Management from Brunel University and a BA (Hons) Degree in Leisure Studies from Leeds Metropolitan University. He also holds the Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA), has completed a wide range of specific courses (various HR related training, service specific training and professional development courses), and completed the ODPM Leadership Course. David has also completed a Prince II project

management training course and was a member of the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (SOLACE) and the Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC).

CONSULTANCY WORK

David has undertaken a number of appointments since becoming an associate of CHRGS Ltd. These have included investigations, Locum Clerk work, recruitment and Governance reviews all to the customers' satisfaction.

NEW COUNCILLORS TRAINING DAY

MORNING

What is a Parish Council, how does it work and what does it do?

Roles and responsibilities within the Parish Council

Members' Code of Conduct, declarations of interest and pre-determination

Committees, sub-committees and working groups

Agenda, meetings and minutes

How the Parish Council is financed and how the money is spent

LUNCH

AFTERNOON

We hold our own Council meeting

Wrap up question and answer session

