

**Cabinet
21 September 2021**

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF REPORT: Council Plan and Priorities 2022-2027

REPORT OF: Policy and Communities Manager

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

COUNCIL PRIORITY: BE A WELCOMING, INCLUSIVE, AND EFFICIENT COUNCIL / BUILD THRIVING AND RESILIENT COMMUNITIES / RESPOND TO CHALLENGES TO THE ENVIRONMENT / ENABLE AN ENTERPRISING AND CO-OPERATIVE ECONOMY / SUPPORT THE DELIVERY OF GOOD QUALITY AND AFFORDABLE HOMES

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report proposes a new Council Plan and process for finalising the Plan.

2. Recommendations

2.1 That Cabinet reviews and recommends the approval of the Council Plan to Full Council (Appendix A) with the three new Council Priorities as outlined below:

- People First
- Sustainability
- A Brighter Future Together

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 The Council Plan is a key element of the corporate business planning process, as a high-level strategic document it sets out the Council's Priorities for the next year. As an overarching policy framework document, it guides and influences the use of Council resources; providing a focus for activities, plans and services the Council provide. There is a need to provide closer links between the Council Plan and Medium-Term Financial Strategy

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1 That the Priorities remain as they are, but this does not reflect the substantially changed environment that councils operate in – i.e. the ongoing impact of the pandemic and the uncertainty of central government support to local authorities.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

5.1 No external consultation has been undertaken in the preparation of this report. The administration have considered and proposed some draft Priorities and this has been considered by a small working group. The working group comprised of the following:

Leader, Deputy Leader, Executive Member for Finance and IT, Executive Member for Community Engagement, Managing Director, Section 151 officer, Communications Manager, Policy Team to provide more detail. The Political Liaison Board also considered the new Priorities and revised outline Plan. Service Directors have also had the opportunity to contribute to the formation of the Plan.

6. FORWARD PLAN

- 6.1 This report does not contain a recommendation on a key Executive decision and has therefore not been referred to in the Forward Plan.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1 The Council Plan is considered alongside the budget position (Medium-Term Financial Strategy) of the authority.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1. At the time of considering this Council Plan, the Council is still working hard to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, with much of our resource dedicated to maintaining Council services and supporting the most vulnerable in our communities. As restrictions imposed in response to the pandemic have relaxed, there is the need to work to support the recovery of impacted services, the operation of the Council, and the community recovery. This work will take precedence over the activities and projects for the coming civic year, but where we are able to progress items we will endeavour to do so. As the length of the pandemic and the recovery are unknown the timescales for these activities and projects will inevitably be subject to change.
- 8.2. The Council Plan highlights key issues and aims for the district. The Plan sets out the context in which the Council operates, our ambitions, and the close links to the Medium-Term Financial Strategy. The format of the Plan has been reviewed to provide an easy summary of key information. The Council Plan will inform the subsequent agreement of the service plans as prepared by each directorate within the Council, setting out each service, team and individual's objectives. Having considered the relevant factors, the Council Priorities for 2022-2027 are to be the following:
- People First
 - Sustainability
 - A Brighter Future Together
- 8.3 All projects to be included in the Council Plan should be subject to the provision of sound business cases with specific targets established as they are introduced. The Council's performance against these will be monitored and reported on a regular basis.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Cabinet's terms of reference include at 5.6.38 the power, by recommendation "to advise the Council in the formulation of those policies within the Council's terms of reference".
- 9.2 Full Council's terms of reference provide "approving or adopting the policy framework which at 4.2.1 (f) include "Priorities/ Objectives for the District." The Council Plan 2022-2027 at Appendix A represents the priorities.

- 9.3 The Council Plan Priorities outlined for 2022-2027 onward will provide high level reference points that will assist the Council making clear and effective decisions.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The Council Plan recognises the importance of aligning with the Medium Term Financial Strategy. This ensures that Council adopts policy-led budgeting, and also does not commit to policies or projects that it cannot afford to deliver. The Council Plan generally provides high level policy commitments, which can be delivered in several different ways and therefore the resources required cannot be fully determined. It also includes examples of specific projects, and these are generally already included in budget estimates. For the larger projects (particularly capital projects) there is a risk that the costs may increase as more information becomes available. This would affect the value for money of the project and may lead to a different decision on whether or how it should be progressed.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 Adoption of the Council Plan and within it the Council's Priorities for 2022 – 2027 commences the Council's Business Planning processes for the next financial year. A robust Corporate Business Planning process that links the Council Plan with the Medium-Term Financing Plan is key to managing the Council's identified Corporate Risk of "Managing the Council's Finances".
- 11.2 The risks and opportunities associated with the individual projects proposed will be assessed to ensure informed decisions are made on the overall programme of activity that the Council can deliver and to be in the best position to manage potential threats to success and maximise opportunities.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1. In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of their functions, give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 12.2 In setting its Council Plan Priorities, the Council is seeking to address equality implications in the services it provides. Through the remainder of the Corporate Business Planning Process it will carry out Equalities Impact Assessments for those Efficiency or Investment options that are taken forward where required.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1. The Social Value Act and "go local" requirements do not apply to this report, as this is not a procurement exercise or contract.

14. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1. Environmental impacts assessments will be carried out against the relevant proposed actions as they reach fruition in the civic year.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1 There are no additional human resource requirements arising from this report other than those which have emerged as a result of the pandemic around the operation and recovery of services, as raised at paragraph 8.1. The resources needed to deliver services are considered and addressed through the Corporate Business Planning process. Once these Priorities are agreed for retention, then these will be cascaded to staff via staff briefings with several reminders via Insight, the SCF and the intranet.

16. APPENDICES

- 16.1 Appendix A Council Plan.

17. CONTACT OFFICERS

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18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 18.1 None.