

***PART 1 – PUBLIC DOCUMENT**

TITLE OF REPORT: Council Plan and Priorities 2024-2028

REPORT OF: Policy and Communities Manager

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

COUNCIL PRIORITY: People First/Sustainability/A Brighter Future Together

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 four new Council Priorities as outlined below:

- Thriving Communities
- Accessible Services
- Responsible Growth
- Sustainability

2.2 Delegate authority to the Managing Director and Leader of the Council to approve any minor amendments to wording required as a result of the design process.

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 four years. As an overarching policy framework document, it guides and influences the use of Council resources; providing a focus for activities, plans, and services that the Council provide. The introduction to the plan highlights the link between the Council Plan and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and service delivery plans.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

4.1 That the current Council Plan (2022-2027) and its Priorities remain as they are. However this does not reflect the changed political landscape at a national level. For example, the new government has recognised the need for longer term funding reform for local government but there is still uncertainty around the timeframes for this and exactly what this will look like for us. The current plan also does not reflect our most recent and upcoming work. It should be noted that it is the wish of the new leader and their administration to update the Council Plan and the priorities following their election in May 2024 for a four-year term.

5. CONSULTATION WITH RELEVANT MEMBERS AND EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS

- 5.1 No external consultation has been undertaken in the preparation of this report. An externally facilitated workshop took place to establish the parameters for the new plan and priorities with the Administration, Leadership Team, the Policy & Strategy team and the Communications Manager attendance. A smaller working group was subsequently set up, comprising of the Managing Director, Section 151 officer, Service Director for Environmental Health and Housing, Leader and Deputy Leader, administration members selected by the Leader, the Policy & Strategy Team and the Communications Manager. The Policy & Strategy team were tasked with drafting the Council Plan, priorities and accompanying initiatives in more detail. Two subsequent workshops were held with the administration to gain feedback on the suggested direction. All members of the small working group and the Leadership Team have been given the opportunity to comment on a draft of the plan. The Political Liaison Board will have also considered the new Priorities and draft Plan. Their comments will be incorporated into the final version 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. It is underpinned by the Council Delivery Plan and subsequent Service Plans.

8. RELEVANT CONSIDERATIONS

- 8.1. 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 Council Plan will inform the Council Delivery Plan. This Delivery plan sets out the key projects that are carried out through each year to support the priorities of the Council plan. This is monitored on a quarterly basis to make sure the projects achieve the stated objectives. This then allows for 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 2024-2028 are to be the following:

- Thriving Communities
- Accessible Services
- Responsible Growth
- Sustainability

- 8.2 All projects which go on to be included in the Council Plan Delivery 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.

- 8.3 It should be noted that this is a plain-text version only. The plan will be formatted and designed once the content is approved. The design will draw from the look and feel of our current strategies to ensure brand consistency.
- 8.4 The recommendation to delegate authority to the Managing Director and Leader of the Council to approve minor amendments is to enable small changes which may be needed at the design stage to ensure a well-designed document.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Cabinet's terms of reference include at 5.7.38 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 at 4.4.1 (a) provide "*approving or adopting the Policy Framework*" which at 4.2.1 (f) include "*Priorities/ Objectives for the District.*" The Council Plan 2024-2028 at Appendix A represents the priorities.
- 9.3 The Council Plan Priorities outlined for 2024-2028 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.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 Good Risk Management supports and enhances the decision-making process, increasing the likelihood of the Council meeting its objectives and enabling it to respond quickly and effectively to change. When taking decisions, risks and opportunities must be considered.
- 11.2 Adoption of the Council Plan and within it the Council's Priorities for 2024 – 2028 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 "Financial Sustainability".
- 11.3 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 various inequalities amongst communities including health and social inequalities. Equality Impact Assessments will be undertaken for relevant projects as and when they reach fruition.

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. Sustainability is one of the proposed Priorities and as such projects should come forth to support this priority and projects in general should align with this priority.

15. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

15.1 There are no additional human resource requirements arising from this report. The resources needed to deliver services are considered and addressed through the Corporate Business Planning process and Service Plans. 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 2024-2028.

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18. BACKGROUND PAPERS

18.1 None.