

Report of:	Chief Executive
Executive Member:	The Elected Mayor of Middlesbrough
Submitted to:	Executive
Date:	20 December 2023
Title:	The Council Plan, 2024-27
Report for:	Discussion
Status:	Public
Strategic Priority:	Not applicable. The purpose of this report is to set out the planned approach to development and delivery of the Council Plan 2024-27 and its strategic priorities and ambitions.
Key decision:	No
Why:	Not applicable
Subject to call in?:	No
Why:	The report is to seek Executive endorsement. The decision to agree a new Council Plan is reserved for full Council, as part of the Budget and Policy Framework.

Proposed decision(s)

That the Executive:

- Endorses the proposed Council Plan 2024-27 and associated strategic aims, ambitions, and outcomes prior to full Council approval of the final Council Plan 2024-27 and to enable development of detailed, supporting delivery plans.
- Recommends seeking feedback and input from partners and stakeholders to enable the further development of the Council Plan 2024-27, prior to full Council approval of the final Council Plan 2024-27 and alongside the final 2024/25 Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) Update 2024/25 to 2026/27 report.

Executive summary

This report sets out a proposed Council Plan 2024-27, seeking Executive endorsement on its structure and content, setting out how we will work with our communities, to take forward our shared aims and ambitions over the 2024 to 2027 period.

It is proposed that the Council Plan 2024-27 is structured around the following aims:

A Successful and Ambitious Town: *Maximising economic growth, employment and prosperity, in an inclusive and environmentally sustainable way.*

A Healthy Place: *Helping our residents to live longer and healthier lives, improving life chances and opportunities to thrive.*

Safe and Resilient Communities: *Creating a safer environment where residents can live more independent lives.*

Delivering Best Value: *Changing how we operate, to deliver affordable and cost-effective outcomes for residents and businesses.*

The report outlines the next steps for the finalisation of the plan which will be considered by Council in February 2024, and the more detailed Service Plans to the Executive in March 2024.

Purpose

1. That the Executive endorses, prior to consideration by full Council on 28 February 2024, the Council Plan 2024-27, ensuring that it remains current and reflective of major developments of the past year, and those anticipated in the coming three years.
2. The Council Plan, formerly known as the Strategic Plan, is the Council's overarching business plan for the medium-term, and is refreshed on an annual basis, setting out the priorities of the Elected Mayor of Middlesbrough, the ambitions for our communities and the ways in which we seek to achieve them.
3. Part of the Council's Policy Framework, the Council Plan requires the approval of full Council, as set out in the [Constitution](#). The Council's Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules provide for the Executive to draw up firm proposals on the Strategic Plan (Change Strategy) for submission to Full Council.
4. Full Council approved the previous Strategic Plan 2021-2024 on 16 February 2021, which expressed the previous Mayors' priorities for the town.
5. This report commences the process of developing a new Council Plan for the 2024-27 period articulating the aims and ambitions of Mayor Cooke elected in May 2023, which are informed by, and responsive to the views of residents and will need to be delivered within available resources.
6. The Council's strategies and plans must be evidence based and financially sustainable, if they are to be effective in addressing the challenges facing Middlesbrough. To that end, the output and analysis of the recent resident survey, considered elsewhere on this agenda, and the draft Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and budget proposals proposed for consultation are being used to shape the Council Plan and determine service priorities within the financial constraints facing the Council. Both reports will be considered at the same meeting of the Executive on 20 December 2023 and formed part of briefings for the Executive and all members, held on 12 December 2023.

7. As set out in the draft 2024/25 Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) Update 2024/25 to 2026/27 report, the current budget proposals are insufficient to achieve a legally balanced budget for 2024/25 and further work is required to address the budget shortfall, to meet the Council's statutory responsibility for a balanced General Fund Revenue Budget for 2024/25 and to achieve financial sustainability over the medium term to 2026/27 and beyond.
8. The outcome of the budget consultation exercise will inform the budget proposals presented as part of the final 2024/25 Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) Update 2024/25 to 2026/27 report for consideration and approval by Council on 28 February 2024. This will shape the development of detailed service plans to enable delivery of the Council Plan 2024-27. The consultation will run between 21 December 2023 to 18 January 2024.

Recommendations

That the Executive:

- Endorses the proposed Council Plan 2024-27 and associated strategic aims, ambitions, and outcomes prior to full Council approval of the final Council Plan 2024-27 and to enable development of detailed, supporting delivery plans.
- Recommends seeking feedback and input from partners and stakeholders to enable the further development of the Council Plan 2024-27, prior to full Council approval of the final Council Plan 2024-27 and alongside the final 2024/25 Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) Update 2024/25 to 2026/27 report.

Rationale for the recommended decision(s)

9. To enable the Executive to endorse, prior to consideration by full Council, the Council Plan 2024-27, ensuring that it is reflective of major developments of the past year, and those anticipated in the coming three years.

Background and relevant information

10. The Council is currently mid-way through a corporate governance improvement journey, following the report and findings of the Council's external auditor, Ernst and Young's in July 2022 which reported significant areas of concerns in governance, including relations between members and officers.
11. Following communication of the findings of the external auditor, the Council brought in external support (CIPFA and the LGA) to support with the development of the corporate governance improvement plan, alongside undertaking a review of the organisation's financial resilience.
12. Despite progress made, in January 2023, the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), issued a Best Value Notice. To respond effectively to the wider governance challenges facing the Council, the corporate governance improvement plan was refreshed in July 2023 around two specific themes: cultural transformation and financial resilience.
13. An Independent improvement Advisory Board was established to provide expertise, challenge and advice in delivery of the revised governance improvement, with the first meeting taking place in September 2023.
14. The Leadership Team has worked collaboratively with the Mayor and the Executive to incorporate the Mayor's aims, and ambitions for the town within the proposed Council Plan 2024-27 as set out below:

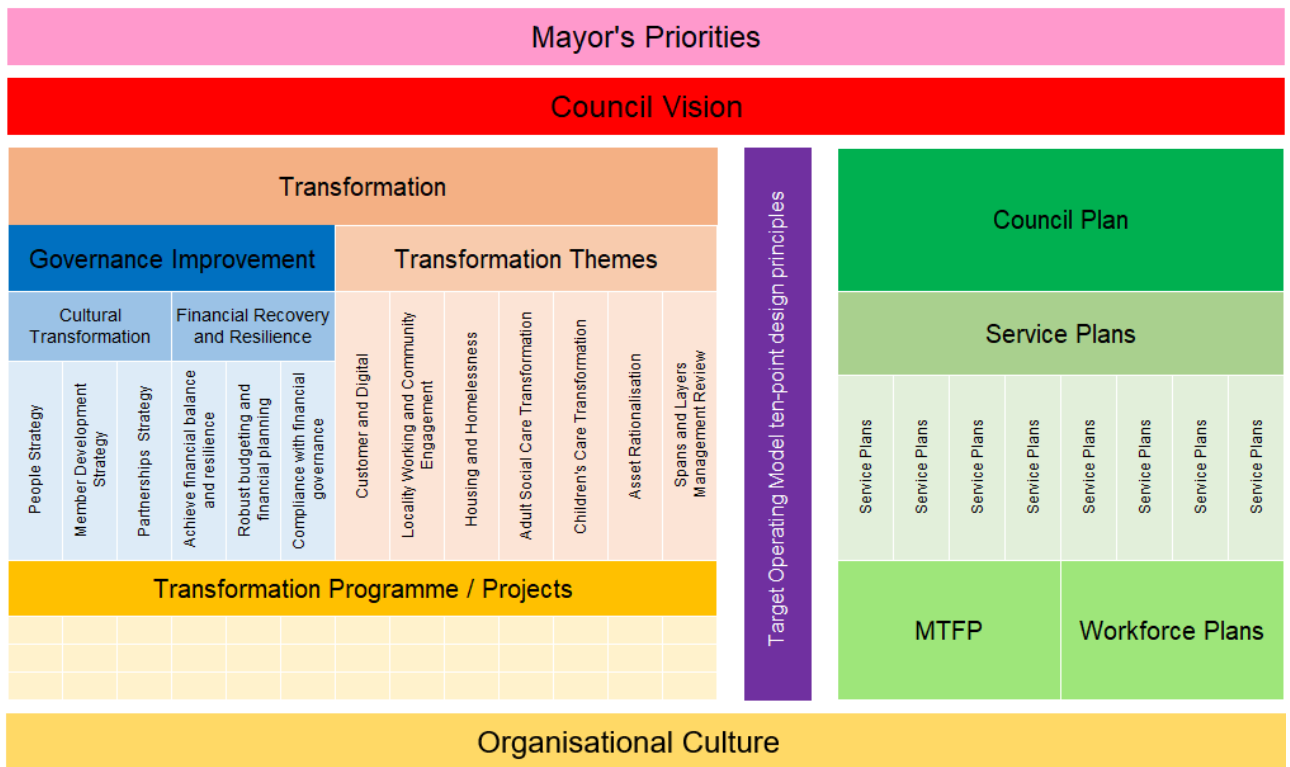
Aims	A Successful and Ambitious Town Maximising economic growth, employment and prosperity, in an inclusive and environmentally sustainable way.	A Healthy Place Helping our residents to live longer and healthier lives, improving life chances and opportunities to thrive.	Safe and Resilient Communities Creating a safer environment where residents can live more independent lives.	Delivering Best Value Changing how we operate, to deliver affordable and cost effective outcomes for residents and businesses.
	We will thrive			
Priorities / Ambitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attract and grow local business, increasing employment opportunities Improve attainment in education and skills Housing provision will meet local demand and need 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve life-chances for children and adults, to address and respond to health inequalities Protect and improve our environment Promote inclusivity for all Reduce poverty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support adults to be independent for longer Improve connectivity: digital and transport Promote new ideas and community initiatives Reduce crime and anti-social behaviour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set a balanced revenue budget and Medium Term Financial Plan, restoring financial resilience and sustainability Demonstrate robust and effective corporate governance

15. Appendix 1 sets out a proposed Council Plan for the 2024-27 period, which also includes:

- an introduction from the Mayor of Middlesbrough and the Chief Executive
- the Mayor’s aims
- ambitions and priorities for 2024-27
- measures of success
- plans for transformation

16. Supporting initiatives and workplans to support delivery of the Council Plan 2024-27 ambitions and measures of success are being developed into Service Plan, alongside the proposed performance and governance arrangements for Executive decision in March 2024.

17. The diagram below demonstrates the links between the Council Plan, the MTFP and our intentions towards transformation.



18. Successful organisation-wide transformation of the organisation is integral to delivering the Council Plan and MTFP and will see new approaches to the design of service delivery, drive improved controls and efficiencies and implement effective demand management measures to enable the Council to deliver improved outcomes for the community, from a lower cost base that is financially sustainable. In recognising the evolving landscape, the Council is committed to adopting innovative approaches in the design and delivery of services, encompassing new strategies, partnerships and collaborative efforts with stakeholders.

19. As an authority in the midst of significant change and challenge, transformation is key to delivering services more effectively and making positive changes to improve our culture. This involves a continuous process of monitoring external factors, staying abreast of best practice and innovation, and being agile in responding to emerging challenges and opportunities. The Council sees transformation not as a one-time event but as an ongoing journey that aligns with the ever-changing landscape of public service and governance.

Other potential alternative(s) and why these have not been recommended

20. It is imperative that the Council effectively articulates and communicates an overarching plan to direct activity across Directorates and services, towards the achievement of its priorities and ambitions.

21. The only other realistic potential decision would be to leave the Council's strategic objectives unchanged on the assumption that they are sufficiently robust to address and achieve previously identified outcome measures. This, however, is not correct and neither would it represent an appropriate response to the needs of the town, it would detrimentally impact local communities and the business of the Council for some years ahead.

22. The only other feasible decisions therefore relate to the structure of the document, and its horizon (i.e., reverting to an annual plan). It is strongly in the Council's interest to plan over the medium-term, (between 3 – 5 years) in line with the indicative budgets over this period outlined by the Government. The proposed document achieves this whilst also providing an appropriate level of detail for all audiences on the Council's planned activity over this period.

Impact(s) of the recommended decision(s)

Financial (including procurement and Social Value)

23. The Council Plan and the Council's annual revenue and capital budgets are developed in parallel, to ensure full alignment between the Council's ambitions and spending plans. In outlining an achievable programme of work that delivers performance improvement within reduced resources, the Council Plan and its supporting Service Plans therefore demonstrate how the Council will deliver value for money in the medium-term.

Legal

24. Implementation of the Council Plan will enable the Council to operate within the resources available to it, and continue to meet its various statutory duties, including the overarching Duty of Best Value.

Risk

18. The proposed Council Plan sets out a range of activity to address the key risks within the Council's Strategic Risk Register which have the ability to impact on the Council's ability to achieve the ambitions set out in the Council Plan. As such, once the new Council Plan is agreed by full Council, a review of the current content will be completed, with any changes reported to Executive, as part of the quarterly performance management reports.

Human Rights, Public Sector Equality Duty and Community Cohesion

19. The proposed Council Plan will have a positive impact on individuals and communities. It contains within it, plans to ensure that the Council has an inclusive approach for all its residents. An impact assessment has been completed on the draft plan and is attached to this report at Appendix 2.

Climate Change / Environmental

20. The proposed Council Plan will have a positive impact on climate change and the environment, with a specific priority to 'protect and improve our environment' which will focus Council activity on these areas. The Plan will set a series of measurable outcomes to be achieved against this theme.

Children and Young People Cared for by the Authority and Care Leavers

21. The proposed Council Plan will have a positive impact on children and young people, with a proposed priority to 'improve education and attainment' with focused activity directed at these areas. The Plan will set a series of measurable outcomes to be achieved against this theme including a particular focus on the steps we can take to improve the educational attainment of children and young people cared for by the Authority and Care leavers.

Data Protection / GDPR

22. There are no concerns that the proposed plan could impact adversely on data protection or GDPR.

Actions to be taken to implement the recommended decision(s)

Action	Responsible Officer	Deadline
Subject to Executive endorsement, the proposed Council Plan 2024-27 will be presented to full Council on for consideration and approval.	Head of Strategy, Business and Customer	Feb 2024
Subject to full Council approval of Council Plan 2024-27, supporting Service Plans and associated delivery plans will be developed and presented to Executive for approval.	Head of Strategy, Business and Customer	Mar 2024

Appendices

1	Proposed Council Plan 2024-27
2	Impact Assessment (screening level)

Background papers

Body	Report title	Date
Executive	Refreshing the Strategic Plan workplan for the 2022-24 period	5 Apr 2022
Executive	Strategic Plan 2022-24	14 Feb 2022
Executive	Strategic Plan 2021-24	16 Feb 2021

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