

MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

Report of:	Chief Executive
Executive Member:	The Mayor and Executive Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health
Submitted to:	Council
Date:	8 March 2024
Title:	The Council Plan, 2024-27
Report for:	Decision
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:	Not applicable

Proposed decision(s)

That Council:

- Approves the final Council Plan 2024-27 and associated strategic priorities and outcomes to enable development of detailed, supporting delivery plans.

Executive summary

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

The Council Plan 2024-27 is structured around the following vision and priorities:

The vision for Middlesbrough is a thriving, healthier, safer and more ambitious place where people want to live, work, invest, and visit. We will support our residents to live fulfilling lives, to ensure that our communities thrive.

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.*

More detailed service and delivery plans, will be considered by the Executive in March 2024.

Purpose

1. This report sets out the Council Plan 2024-27 and seeks Council approval on its structure and content, setting out how we will work with our communities, to take forward our shared priorities over the 2024 to 2027 period.
2. The intent of the report is to provide enough information and assurance for Council to approve 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.

Recommendations

That Council:

- Approves the final Council Plan 2024-27 and associated strategic priorities and outcomes to enable development of detailed, supporting delivery plans.

Rationale for the recommended decision(s)

3. To enable Council to approve 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

4. 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.
5. 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.

6. Full Council approved the previous Strategic Plan 2021-2024 on 16 February 2021, which expressed the previous Mayors' priorities for the town.
7. This report proposes 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 which will need to be delivered within available resources.

Corporate Governance Journey

8. 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 LLP in July 2022 which reported significant areas of concerns in governance, including relations between members and officers.
9. 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.
10. 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 September 2023 around two specific themes: cultural transformation and financial resilience. Simultaneously, the external auditor escalated concerns via statutory recommendations, under Section 24 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act, which the Council responded to with an action plan of improvements, aligning with the Corporate Governance Improvement Plan intentions.
11. An Independent improvement Advisory Board was established to provide expertise, challenge, and advice against delivery of the revised governance improvement plan, with the first meeting taking place in September 2023. Progress against which (and including the Section 24 improvements), is reported at these monthly Boards, as well as each meeting of full Council and Audit Committee.
12. Whilst Government has since recognised progress made, however due to the seriousness and extent of the issues identified, the Best Value Notice has been extended for a further six months.

Resident and Budget Consultation impact

13. 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 and the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) and budget consultations have been used to shape the Council Plan and determine service priorities within the financial constraints facing the Council. Both reports were considered at the same meeting of the Executive on 28 February 2024 and are submitted to Council for approval.

2023 Resident Survey

14. The detailed findings of the Resident Survey were presented to a meeting of the Executive in December 2023, though to summarise they identified a decline in satisfaction with Council services since the survey was last undertaken in 2017. These findings have shaped the priorities within the proposed Council Plan 2024-27.
15. Key headline findings were:

- 37% of residents felts that the Council provided value for money, compared to 48% in 2017 and national average, also of 48%.
- 47% of residents were satisfied with street cleaning, in comparison to 66% previously.
- 66% of residents are satisfied with the local area as a place to live, in comparison to 81% in 2017.

2024/25 Budget Consultation

16. The outcome of the budget consultation exercise informs the final budget proposals which will be presented as part of the final 2024/25 Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) Update 2024/25 to 2026/27 report for approval by full Council on 8 March 2024, at the same time at this report. Furthermore, the analysis of the consultation will shape the development of detailed service plans to enable delivery of the Council Plan 2024-27.
17. A number of channels were used to promote the budget consultation to enable members of the public, Council staff and local businesses to engage and contribute. As a result:
- Over 1,100 responses to the consultation were received: the highest response rate in the last 5 years.
 - Four public consultation events were held and attended by over 90 people.
 - The creation of social media posts and an e-newsletter enabled more targeted consultation.

Approach to developing Council Plan priorities and success measures

18. The Leadership Team has worked collaboratively with the Mayor and the Executive to develop and shape the Mayor’s priorities for the town within the proposed Council Plan 2024-27, as set out below.

A Successful and Ambitious Town	A Healthy Place	Safe and Resilient Communities	Delivering Best Value
Maximising economic growth, employment and prosperity, in an inclusive and environmentally sustainable way.	Helping our residents to live longer and healthier lives, improving life chances and opportunities to thrive.	Creating a safer environment where residents can live more independent lives.	Changing how we operate, to deliver the best outcomes for residents and businesses.
Attract and grow local business, increasing employment opportunities Improve attainment in education and skills Housing provision will meet local demand and need	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	Support adults to be independent for longer Improve connectivity, digital and transport Promote new ideas and community initiatives Reduce crime and anti-social behaviour	Set a balanced revenue budget and Medium Term Financial Plan, restoring financial resilience and sustainability Demonstrate robust and effective corporate governance

19. Appendix 1 sets out the Council Plan for the 2024-27 period, which includes:
- an introduction from the Mayor of Middlesbrough and the Chief Executive
 - the Mayor’s priorities
 - the Council’s ambitions and priorities for 2024-27
 - measures of success
 - plans for transformation
20. The Council Plan will be underpinned by a performance management framework, to assess the impact of planned activities against achievement of its ambition. Progress will be reported to the Executive each quarter and will include the success measures determining the impact upon:
- the types of businesses being established in Middlesbrough, to ensure that we attract those which will give residents access to well-paid and rewarding careers,
 - healthy life expectancy of residents of Middlesbrough, who currently experience ill-health much earlier than wealthy areas across the UK,

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

3. 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.
4. 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.
5. 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)

6. The Council Plan 2024-27 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

7. Implementation of the Council Plan 2024-27 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

8. 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

9. The Council Plan 2024-27 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

10. 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

11. 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

12. 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 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	Council Plan 2024-27
2	Impact Assessment (screening level)

Background papers

Body	Report title	Date
Executive	Strategic Plan 2021-24	16 Feb 2021
Executive	Strategic Plan 2022-24	14 Feb 2022
Executive	Refreshing the Strategic Plan workplan for the 2022-24 period	5 Apr 2022
Executive	2023 Residents Survey	20 Dec 2023
Executive	Draft Council Plan 2024-27	20 Dec 2023

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Appendix 1: Council Plan 2024-27