

**County Council**

**22 June 2022**

**Council Plan 2022-2026**

**Key Decision CORP/R/22/04**



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**Report of the Corporate Management Team**

**Paul Darby, Corporate Director of Resources**

**Councillor Amanda Hopgood, Leader of the Council**

**Electoral division(s) affected:**

Countywide

**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 To approve the Council Plan, covering the period 2022-2026.

**Executive summary**

- 2 The Council Plan is our primary corporate planning document. It details Durham County Council's contribution towards achieving the objectives set out in the Vision for County Durham 2035, together with our own objectives and change agenda. It aims to provide a readable and accessible summary for members, partners and the public on our priorities for the county and the main programmes of work that we will undertake over the forthcoming four years to help achieve these priorities.
- 3 The Council Plan aligns to both the council's Medium-Term Financial Plan which sets out how our priorities will be resourced and the County Durham Plan which is a spatial representation of our ambitions contained within the Council Plan around housing, jobs and the environment until 2035, as well as the transport, schools and infrastructure to support it.
- 4 The current Council Plan was approved in by County Council in November 2020, covering a period of four years. It has been refreshed to reflect the political changes in the Council in May 2021, sets an additional objective relating to the environment and climate change and has been updated to reflect new initiatives such as the development of the inclusive economic strategy, the declaration of an ecological emergency by Cabinet and the decisions taken on the

review of the former DLI museum. It reflects the outcome of the review of the plans to occupy the newly constructed building on The Sands in Durham City and the revised proposals for the location of the council's Headquarters (HQ) functions and use of its estate to support wider economic objectives for the county should the council not occupy The Sands site.

- 5 The Council Plan reflects the ambitious nature of the Council and how we will build back better following the pandemic as demonstrated by the success of our business parks and the increasing employment rate.
- 6 Historically, the Council has been updated every three to four years. In future, it is proposed that the Council Plan is refreshed annually to ensure full integration of corporate and financial planning. The process to refresh this Plan will therefore begin in September.
- 7 The Council Plan is underpinned by a series of corporate strategies and service planning arrangements providing more detailed information on the actions, major projects and improvements, which are being undertaken to deliver on our priorities. The detail within these delivery plans has not been replicated within the Council Plan.
- 8 In terms of practicality, some of the programmes of work being undertaken by the council contribute to more than one objective. In these situations, the action is listed under one objective in terms of best fit rather than replicate the same action multiple times throughout the plan. Those actions and plans that are still subject to negotiation or future planning decisions are not included in the plan so as not to prejudge future decisions.

### **Recommendation(s)**

- 9 Council is recommended to approve the Council Plan 2022 - 2026 attached at Appendix 2;

## Background

- 10 The Vision for County Durham 2035 was developed together with partner organisations and the public and sets out what we would like the county to look like in 15 years' time. It was approved by Council and launched by the County Durham Partnership in 2019.
- 11 The Vision for County Durham is structured around three ambitions, namely:
- (i) More and better jobs
  - (ii) People live long and independent lives
  - (iii) Communities are well connected and supportive of each other
- 12 Each of the three ambitions contains a number of objectives.
- 13 The tenet of these ambitions and each of the objectives are adopted within the current Council Plan and supplemented by a number of other council-specific objectives to capture corporate initiatives and what is important to Durham County Council.
- 14 The refreshed Council Plan 2022 – 2026 has been structured around five objectives, capturing the three ambitions in the Vision for County Durham:
- (i) **Our economy** – capturing the **more and better jobs** ambition from the Vision together with immediate priorities of economic recovery following the pandemic and mitigating the impacts of and harnessing the opportunities of Brexit. This ambition builds on the recent progress we have made in boosting our local economy, building on recent successes such as:
    - being shortlisted down to the final four locations for UK City of Culture 2025;
    - 95% occupancy levels at council managed employment sites with full occupancy at Jade Business Park and NETPark;
    - The employment rate in County Durham now surpassing the pre-COVID-19 pandemic rate; and
    - Visitors starting to return to the county with an estimated 140,000 visitors attending the most ambitious edition of

Lumiere yet in November 2021, which extended across County Durham as well as in Durham City for first time.

- (ii) **Our people** – capturing the **long and independent lives** ambition from the vision and supplementing it with the immediate priority of supporting people post-pandemic and supporting vulnerable people. This ambition builds on the support that we have provided to people throughout the pandemic and the lessons learned from this. We aim to further support the health and wellbeing of our residents through our ambitious leisure transformation programme.
- (iii) **Our communities** – capturing the **connected communities** ambition from the vision and supplementing it with a specific objective around post-pandemic recovery of communities. We want to ensure that resources are targeted at those communities that need it most and will be carrying out a comprehensive community development review. We also recognise our responsibilities towards those in need of humanitarian support and will ensure that County Durham is doing its fair share in helping those fleeing conflict from areas such as Ukraine,
- (iv) **Our environment** – capturing the council’s priorities around the climate emergency and our zero carbon ambitions for the county and the council together with our role in waste, pollution and the natural environment. This ambition makes it easier for the reader to check out our agenda for the environment and our plans to take forward:
  - Our climate emergency action plan;
  - The development of an action plan to address the ecological emergency that Cabinet declared on 6 April 2022;
  - Our plans for managing waste disposal in future and for reducing waste and increasing re-use and recycling; and
  - Our actions around enhancing the natural environment
- (v) **Our council** – capturing corporate ambitions in respect of effective resource management, creating a workforce for the future, modernising our use of data and technology to guide efficient resource allocation and providing excellent customer service.

- 15 The document sets out under each ambition, what our priority is, what our achievements have been, what the issues are to address, what the council's contribution is in these areas, what our future approach will be, what major projects we will be undertaking and what are the key performance indicators and targets for each objective.
- 16 The government has recently published a plan to remove all coronavirus restrictions as the virus enters its endemic phase and society learns to live with COVID. This change in approach is reflected in this plan.
- 17 As a public authority, as set out in the Equality Act 2010, Durham County Council is required to publish equality objectives and review these on a triennial basis. These are also incorporated into the plan.
- 18 Historically, the Council Plan has been updated every three to four years. In future, it is proposed that the plan is refreshed annually to ensure full integration of corporate and financial planning.
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- 20 In terms of practicality, some of the programmes of work being undertaken by the council contribute to more than one objective. In these situations, the action is listed under one objective in terms of best fit rather than replicate the same action multiple times throughout the plan. Those actions and plans that are still subject to negotiation or future planning decisions are not included in the plan so as not to prejudge future decisions.

## **Conclusion**

- 21 The Council Plan 2022 – 2026 contained in Appendix 2 sets out our priorities for the forthcoming four years.
- 22 It is the primary document within our policy framework and requires approval by Council.

## **Background papers**

- County Durham Vision (County Council, 23 October 2019)  
<https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/documents/s115064/Draft%20Durham%20Vision%20v10.0.pdf>
- Council Plan 2020 to 2023 (current plan)  
<https://www.durham.gov.uk/article/2366/Council-Plan>

- Consideration of draft Council Plan 2022-2026 at Cabinet, 27 April 2022 (agenda, decisions and minutes)  
<https://democracy.durham.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=154&MId=14652&Ver=4>

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

The Constitution of the Council sets out the policy framework of the Council which includes the Council Plan and performance management framework. The Council Plan includes the council's quality objectives which we are required to set by law (Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011)

### **Finance**

The Council Plan aligns to the council's Medium-Term Financial Plan, which sets out how our priorities will be resourced. Any financial implications arising from the implementation of actions contained in the Council Plan are factored into the budget setting and MTFP planning processes.

### **Consultation**

The Council Plan sets out the Council's contribution to delivering the aims and objectives set out the County Vision, which was developed following an extensive three phase consultation where over 30,000 responses were considered, and which helped shape the final vision.

### **Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty**

In line with the Equality Act 2010, Durham County Council is required to set out equality objectives and review these on a triennial basis. The Council Plan sets out our equality objectives to identify and tackle discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

### **Climate Change**

A specific objective relating to "Our Environment" has been incorporated into the Council Plan to elevate and highlight this important agenda and the work of the council in this area.

### **Human Rights**

None.

### **Crime and Disorder**

Crime and disorder features as part of the proposed Council Plan.

### **Staffing**

None.

**Accommodation**

None.

**Risk**

Risk management is an intrinsic part of the council's performance reporting arrangements.

**Procurement**

None.