

County Council

22 February 2023

Council Plan 2023/24 – 2026/27 Refresh

Key Decision CORP/R/22/04



Report of Corporate Management Team

John Hewitt, Chief Executive

Councillor Amanda Hopgood, Leader of the Council

Electoral division(s) affected

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To approve the refresh of the Council Plan covering the four-year period 2023-2027.

Executive summary

- 2 The Council Plan is our primary corporate planning document. It details the council's contribution towards achieving the objectives set out in the Vision for County Durham 2035, together with our own objectives and improvement agenda. It aims to provide a readable and accessible summary for Members, officers, partners, and the public on our priorities for the county and the main programmes of work that will undertake over the forthcoming four years to help achieve these priorities.
- 3 The current Council Plan covers the period 2022/23 – 2025/26 and was agreed at Council in June 2022. In line with that report, it is intended that the plan is updated and refreshed on an annual basis going forward in line with our medium-term financial planning and budget setting arrangements.
- 4 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.

- 5 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 our priorities.
- 6 The draft plan was presented to Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board on 23 January for comment. Feedback is contained within paragraph 18.
- 7 The major changes between the current plan and the revised updated plan are set out in Appendix 2.
- 8 The draft plan is presented for consideration in Appendix 3.

Recommendation(s)

- 9 Council is recommended to approve the Council Plan 2023-2027 as attached in Appendix 3.

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:
 - (a) More and better jobs
 - (b) People live long and independent lives
 - (c) Communities are well connected and supportive of each other
- 12 Each of the three ambitions contains a number of strategic objectives.
- 13 The tenet of these ambitions and each of the strategic 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 current structure and format of the Council Plan was agreed last year and the updated / refreshed plan attached remains in line with that. It is structured around five themes being:
 - (a) **Our economy** – capturing the council's contribution to the **more and better jobs** ambition within the Vision together with the council's agenda as set out in our Inclusive Economic Strategy.
 - (b) **Our people** – capturing the council's contributions to the **long and independent lives** ambition within the Vision together with our priorities set out in the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy.
 - (c) **Our communities** – capturing the **connected communities** ambition within the Vision and supplementing it with specific actions around helping those communities most in need of support.
 - (d) **Our environment** – capturing the council's priorities and plans around a climate emergency and an economic emergency together with our role in waste management, pollution, and custodianship of the natural environment.
 - (e) **Our council** – capturing Durham County Council's organisational priorities around effective resource management, creating a workforce for the future, and making best use of data and technology to provide the best services to our customers.

- 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 this area, 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 As a public authority, as set out in the Equality Act 2010, the council is required to set equality objectives and review these on a triennial basis. These are incorporated into the plan also.

Feedback from Scrutiny

- 17 The draft plan was presented to Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board on 23 January for input.
- 18 A summary of this feedback and the responses is given below:

Point Raised	Comments
<p>There is a target to increase the proportion of household waste going to landfill to 90% (p. 28)</p> <p>We should have more ambitious targets to dispose of <5% of household waste to landfill and actions within the Plan to help us achieve this.</p>	<p>Volume of residual waste arriving from all sources, including Durham County Council has substantially increased and with finite capacity, the current contractor is therefore unable to treat the entire amounts sent to them. Nevertheless, they are contractually obliged to provide a 90% diversion from landfill as a minimum, and as financial penalties are applied for thresholds lower than this, it is felt that this is a more accurate and realistic benchmark for the remainder of the contract to 2026.</p>
<p>All of our targets for air quality and reductions of nitrogen oxides (NO_x) levels relate to the Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) in Durham City. (p. 28)</p> <p>We should have targets to ensure that NO_x and particulate levels do not exceed minimum levels where they become a cause for concern.</p>	<p>The Council are required to complete an annual air quality status report, which requires an assessment to be undertaken which supports the identification of potentially new non-compliant areas in relation to national air quality standards.</p> <p>This is in addition to reporting progress within our existing AQMA, although it does not necessarily require monitoring to be undertaken as other screening tools can be used to identify key areas of focus.</p>

Point Raised	Comments
	If any additional locations were identified during this process, we would look to address the issues affecting those areas in our air quality work.
Under the priority of Our People, we should have a risk of not having sufficient care workers in place because of recruitment problems.	We have as an issue to address, 'Alleviating a pressured social care and health environment following the pandemic, with challenges associated with workforce (recruitment and retention), service demands and a challenging economic environment.' (p. 32)
It is welcomed that the Plan acknowledges the ecological emergency and the development of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy.	No response required
The Council Plan addresses what we are going to do but not how we are going to do it.	The detail of how we are going to implement actions contained is contained within other plans – service plans, team plans, project plans etc.
How will success against achieving the plan be measured?	The Plan contains two sets of measures; key measures and council service performance indicators under each priority. These indicators will form the basis of the basket of indicators that we will measure council performance against on a quarterly basis through scrutiny committees.
The Plan does not mention Area Action Partnerships (AAPs) or how these will be used to help deliver the plan.	A potential model for the council's future engagement mechanisms will be developed and consulted upon during 2023/24 which builds on the findings of a recently completed community engagement review and the council's AAP structures. This action is captured within the Plan (p. 55)

Point Raised	Comments
How do we manage expectations which is a key risk in delivering this plan?	The council has a corporate risk register which identifies risks which if they were to occur, would prevent delivery of the plan. These are regularly reviewed and monitored through the audit committee.
Why has the achievement of 100% of nursery education providers rated good or outstanding by Ofsted been removed?	This has been removed because this performance figure is no longer correct.

Conclusion

- 19 The draft Council Plan 2023-2027 contained in Appendix 3 sets out our priorities, key programmes of work and associated performance management arrangements for the forthcoming four years.
- 20 The Council Plan is the primary corporate planning document within our policy framework and constitutionally, requires approval by Council.

Background papers

- None

Other useful documents

- [A Vision for County Durham 2035](#)
- [Current Council Plan \(2022 – 2026\)](#)

Author(s)

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

The Constitution of the Council sets out the policy framework of the Council which includes the Council Plan and performance management framework.

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

The Equality Act 2010 requires the council 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

The Council Plan contains a specific theme of "Our Environment" 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

Appendix 2: Major Changes to the Council Plan 2023-2027

Page No.	Section	Changes Made
-	Title Page	Plan period amended to 2023/24 to 2026/27
1-2	Foreword	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reference made to cost of living increase (para. 3) • Reference to sale of Sands building removed (para. 3) • Reference added about new HQ proposals (para. 4) • Reference added re increased financial pressures (para. 5) • Reference to City of Culture 2025 bid updated and added reference to bicentennial of Stockton – Darlington Railway (para. 6) • Added references to our ecological emergency and levelling up (para 8) • Paragraph added on the LA7 devolution deal plans
3	Population and Area	Population fig. updated re Census 2021
4	Council Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sentence added to explain the purpose of this section and breadth of services offered by the council • County Record Office reference amended from miles of archives to numbers of engagements • Corporate parent to 912 children changed to over 1,000 children • Number of people learning to swim added to reference on swimming pool provision • Reference to supporting over 10,000 people through community hubs during the pandemic changed to supporting over 160 Warm Places • Fig. for length of highways maintained amended • Subsidy fig. provided to bus operators amended

5	Our Planning Framework	Reference added about our transformation agenda (2 nd bullet)
6-7	Themes, Priorities and Objectives	<p>Our Economy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist businesses to restart and from the economy following the COVID-19 pandemic (removed) • Work with others to mitigate the impacts and harness the opportunities of exiting the European Union (removed) <p>Our People</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reference to protecting adults with care and support needs from harm added to objective around vulnerable people • Reference to public health response to the COVID-19 pandemic removed from objective about protecting and improving the health of the local population • <i>Ensure that there is no unwarranted variation in opportunity and outcomes between our communities</i> changed to <i>Narrow the inequality gap between our communities</i> <p>Our Communities</p> <p>Objective about providing support to community groups adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic removed</p> <p>Footnote explaining objectives in bold are from the County Durham Vision 2035 added</p>
8-10	Our Vision	<p>Our Economy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reference to an inclusive green economy added • Reference to specific employment sites replaced with a general comment about strategic employment sites • Reference added regarding the County Durham Pound added • Wording changed around The Story at Mount Oswald in line with new branding • Wording updated re City of Culture 2025 bid <p>Our Environment</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Targets re carbon emissions amended in line with CERP2 • Reference added regarding the Education Service working to reduce the carbon footprint of schools <p>Our People</p> <p>Reference added re Education Service preparing young people for life and employability</p>
10-11	Our Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Para inserted re equality and inclusion (para. 1) • New wellbeing principles diagram replacing previous diagram
12-13	Our Financial Plan	To be updated
13	Monitoring	Paras 1 and 2 added to explain the difference between key measures and council service performance indicators added
-	Context: COVID-19 – Response, Restoration, Reset/Recovery	Removed section
14	Priority – Our Economy	Rewrite of this section by service to better align it to the new Inclusive Economic Strategy
15-16	Our Economy – Achievements	<p>Added:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bullet around North East devo deal • New Inclusive Economic Strategy • UK Shared Prosperity Fund • Levelling Up bids • Festival programmes delivered • SEND support figures • % children and young people in good or better schools <p>Removed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation figs. For 16-17 year olds in education, employment, and training • Investment in Beamish Museum (out of date) • Lumiere figures (out of date) • Project Genesis investment (out of date)

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investment in Barnard Castle by GSK (not a council achievement) • Investment in Durham City by council and university (out of date) <p>Amended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jade Business Park, Integra 61, NETPark, Forrest Park and Aykley Heads bullets rewritten to be more outcome focused • Attendance fig added for last year's festival programmes.
15-16	Our economy – Issues to Address	<p>Added:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic recovery from COVID-19 • Cost of living crisis <p>Removed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weaker global economy • COVID-19 business support arrangements • Ability of businesses to respond quickly in the short-term is limited • Exit from EU • COVID impact on educational achievement • Pupils attending good or better schools • Jobs under furlough • School attendance strategies and COVID <p>Amended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment figures • Fuel poverty figures • Ofsted results for schools • Pupils claiming free school meals
16-18	Our Economy – Council Contribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated NETPark figures (para 2) • Updated Jade Business Park para (para 3) • County Durham Pound referenced (para 4) • Reference to government education white paper removed (para 5) • Work with University of Durham and New College Durham and Durham City Incubator added (para 6) • Employability scheme figs updated (para 7) • Para added on the work of Business Durham (para 8) • Update on City of Culture 2025 (para 10)

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Para on COVID-19 business support deleted • Para added on Poverty Strategy (para 11)
18-19	Our Economy - Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVID restrictions para removed • COVID-19 Economic Recovery Plan para removed • Para on labour market demographic most affected by COVID removed • Para 2 rewrite in line with Inclusive Economic Strategy
19-20	Our Economy - Priority Actions	Action plan rewritten for 2023-2027 period with service
21-22	Our Economy – Key Performance Measures and Council Service Performance Indicators	Indicator list rewritten with service and split between two new categories
23	Priority: Our Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More detail on how climate change affects the planet added by service (para 1) • More detail on ecological emergency added by service (para 3)
23-24	Our Environment: Achievements	<p>Added:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Securing government funding for decarbonisation projects • Sustainable transport projects (reopening rail lines) • Bog restoration added • Scaling On Street Charging Initiative added • County Durham Fuel Poverty Partnership added <p>Removed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domestic waste going to landfill • Carbon emissions from council operations since 2008/09 • Single use plastics (out of date) <p>Amended:</p> <p>Latest carbon emissions reduction figs.</p>

24	Our Environment: Issues to Address	Removed: Climate emergency declaration Amended: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reopening rail lines detail • Air Quality Management Areas – Reference to Chester-le-Street AQMA removed • Ecological emergency – reference added to an action plan
25	Our Environment: Council Contribution	Council contribution to countywide carbon emissions moved to Our Council section New para added to differentiate council role in reducing carbon emissions and tackle climate change (para 1) Wording changes to collection, disposal, and treatment of municipal waste to reflect role in reducing waste, increasing reuse, and recycling and improving the quality of recycling through education (para 2) Figs for waste collection, fly-tips etc updated (para 3)
25-26	Our Environment – Approach	Street lighting project added. Minewater heating schemes added, retrofitting schemes removed. (para 1) Further detail added re ecological emergency and impact on nationally significant countryside (para 3)
26-27	Our Environment – Priority Actions	Action plan rewritten for 2023-2027 period with service
27-28	Our Environment - Key Performance Measures and Council Service Performance Indicators	Indicator list rewritten with service and split between two new categories
29	Priority: Our People	Sentence relating to building on assets in our communities added

29-30	Our People - Achievements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teenage pregnancies figs updated • Bullet around being a high performing area for transfers of care from hospital removed • Healthy options hot food takeaways scheme added • Stronger Families programme figs updated • 100% of nursery education providers rated as good or outstanding by Ofsted removed • Strong adoption performance bullet added • Latest ILACS inspection result added • Bullet added on integrated commissioning function added • Bullet on falls prevention pilot added • One Touch Health system bullet added • Great North Care record bullet added • Integrated pathways bullet added • Community equipment review bullet added • CQC outstanding inspection results for three of our regulated services bullet added • Finalists in LGC Awards Public Health category added • Bullet added on the creation of the Protecting Health team • Youth Justice Services winning CYP Now Award bullet removed
31-32	Our People – Issues to address	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost of living crisis bullet added • Smoking prevalence message amended • Breastfeeding figs amended • Combating Drugs and Alcohol Strategy bullet added • Increasing numbers and complexity of SEND cases bullet amended • Increase in complexity of care and court of protection referrals bullet amended • Infectious disease outbreak risk bullet added • messages around life expectancy and healthy life expectancy amended • Bullet around ageing population added • Pressures in social care bullet added • Social care reforms bullet added • Sustaining a robust care market bullet added • Maintaining effective demand management around adult social care bullet added

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring sufficient local placement choice for children in care removed
32-33	Our People – Council Contribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Figs relating to sport and leisure provision updated • Suicide prevention message added • Para on Care Connect added
34	Our People – Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County Durham Together Partnership wording amended
35-38	Our People – Priority Actions	<p>Action plan rewritten for new planning period with service</p> <p>NB The action plan only contains actions for 2023/24 and 2024/25</p>
38-40	Our People - Key Performance Measures and Council Service Performance Indicators	Indicator list rewritten with service and split between two new categories
41	Priority: Our Communities	No amends
41-42	Our Communities - Achievements	<p>Added:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selective licencing scheme • Chapter Homes Business Plan • Refurbishment of New Elvet Bridge <p>Removed:</p> <p>Significant investment in social worker workforce capacity</p> <p>Amended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AAP support to community groups figs • Town and village centre regeneration figs
42	Our Communities – Issues to address	<p>Added:</p> <p>No additional messages</p> <p>Removed:</p> <p>Increased demand and complexity of children’s social care (moved to Our People)</p> <p>Amended:</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Message changed around house prices and proportion of privately rented accommodation • UK internet retail sales % figure
42-43	Our Communities – Council Contribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • House completion figs updated (para 2) • Message added about bringing empty homes back into use (para 2) • Rewrites to further emphasise council contribution and accountabilities regarding new homes, existing housing stock etc (para 2) • Community hub supporting residents self-isolating during pandemic removed • Para added on Warm Spaces (para 3)
43-44	Our Communities – Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Message on developing a Design Code added (para 5)
44-46	Our Communities - Priority Actions	Action plan rewritten for 2023-2027 period with service
46-48	Our Communities – Key Performance Measures and Council Service Performance Indicators	Indicator list rewritten with service and split between two new categories
49-50	Priority: Our Council	<p>Updated message around uncertainties posed by cost of living crisis, exit from EU and catastrophic weather events (para 1)</p> <p>New para on cost of living crisis (para 2)</p> <p>Para around opportunities to develop digital services amended (para 3)</p> <p>Para around partnership working amended (para 4)</p>

50	Our Council – Achievements	<p>Added:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DIBI programme • Warm Spaces initiative • Carbon emissions from council operations • Investors in the Environment ‘green’ status • Superfast broadband and 5G connectivity for residents <p>Removed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council apprenticeship figs • Mental health first aiders and time to change champions figs • Community Hub support during pandemic <p>Amended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cumulative savings fig since 2011/12 • Better Health at Work Award • Disability Confident Leader status • Latest Municipal Journal awards won
51-52	Our Council – Issues to address	<p>Added:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost of living and financial pressures for council • Increased borrowing costs • Net zero organisation message • Recruitment and retention problems in VCS <p>Removed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UK withdrawal from EU • Energy price forecasts • Protecting Health Team (moved to Our People) <p>Amended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial uncertainty message • Ageing population and workforce • Staff mental wellbeing message • Recruitment problems and skilling workforce for the future • Managing data effectively and appropriately

52-53	Our Council – Council Contribution	<p>Workforce message amended to emphasise delivery of and commissioning others to provide services (para 1)</p> <p>Training programme message added (para 2)</p> <p>Digital contact figs amended (para 3)</p> <p>Message on how we use customer feedback amended. Examples provided (para 4)</p> <p>Message on how the pension fund is used to support local businesses added (para 5)</p>
53-54	Our Council – Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Para on pandemic and redeployment removed • Para added about carbon reduction initiatives within the council (para 4)
54-55	Our Council - Priority Actions	<p>Action plan rewritten for 2023-2027 period with service</p> <p>NB the</p>
55-56	Our Council – Key Performance Measures and Council Service Performance Indicators	<p>Indicator list rewritten with service and split between two new categories</p> <p>NB the action plan only covers the first three years of the four-year plan period</p>
57-59	Glossary of Terms	<p>Removed as these terms no longer feature in the text of the Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brexit • Channel shift • Council Tax Hardship Fund • Deprivation indices • Education and health care plan • Furlough • HMRC • Homes England • R number • SARS-CoV-2 • SATs • Signs of Safety • Trusted assessor model

		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Youth Aware of Mental Health (YAM) initiative <p>ILACS added</p>
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