

Cabinet

15 January 2025

Draft Council Plan 2025-2029

Key Decision CORP/R/2025/003



Report of Corporate Management Team

John Hewitt, Chief Executive Officer

Councillor Amanda Hopgood, Leader of the Council

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

- 1 To consider the draft refresh of the Council Plan for the four-year period 2025-2029 before it is submitted to Council for approval.

Executive summary

- 2 Although, our council plan spans four years, we review it every year. This is to ensure it remains relevant, within budget and to timescale.
- 3 We started this review with a seven-week service engagement and public consultation exercise. A summary of feedback received, and our responses is presented in Appendix 2.
- 4 Having considered responses from our services, councillors, staff, partners, and the public, we were able to draft a Council Plan for 2025-29. This is attached at Appendix 3.
- 5 Once the Local Government Finance Settlement has been confirmed (expected December), we will be able to update the finance sections of our plan. However, this will not be until January.
- 6 Approval of the refreshed Council Plan by Council is scheduled for 19 February 2025.

Recommendation(s)

- 7 Cabinet is recommended to:
 - (a) Note the feedback from the consultation and our responses in Appendix 2.

- (b) Consider the content and format of the draft Council Plan 2025-2029 attached at Appendix 3.
- (c) Agree that the refreshed Council Plan be considered for approval by Council on 19 February.
- (d) Delegate authority to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader to make any further minor amends and updates to the document as necessary before it is taken to Council for approval. This will include the refreshed finance section when available.

Background

- 8 The council plan is our principal corporate planning document. It explains how we will effectively deliver our day-to-day services, our longer-term ambitions and contribute to achieving the County Durham Vision¹.
- 9 Detail of the actions and projects we will undertake to help achieve our priorities is contained within our supporting strategies and service plans.
- 10 The council plan spans four years. But we review it every year. This is so it remains relevant, within budget and to timescale. When we review the plan, we consider our most recent achievements (and what we learned), the challenges we face, the opportunities available to us, and our operating environment (internally and externally). We also ask our residents whether we are addressing the issues that matter to them.
- 11 The [current version of our council plan](#) was agreed at Council in February 2024, and we started reviewing it in July. In line with best value guidance, which emphasises the importance of taking into account feedback from residents and service users, we started the process with a seven-week public consultation and service engagement exercise (29 July to 15 September).
- 12 We gathered views through an online survey placed on the council website, a dedicated email address, and paper surveys available in our Customer Access Points and libraries.
- 13 We broadened our reach by raising awareness of the plan, our ambitions and the refresh process. We contacted key consultees such as the County Durham Partnership and its networks, all Area Action Partnerships, the voluntary and community sector network, The Durham Youth Council, the Children in Care Council, local businesses, staff networks and County Durham Association of Local Councils. We attended Extended Management Team and tier 4 / 5 briefing sessions to encourage our staff to participate. And we sent briefing notes to all councillors, and posted an update on the members' portal, offering them the opportunity to contribute. The plan was presented to Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board on 9 December for scrutiny and input, the responses to which, are included in Appendix 2.
- 14 We have considered all feedback and produced a draft Council Plan for 2025-29. A summary of the feedback, and our responses, is attached at Appendix 2. The draft Council Plan 2025-29 is attached at Appendix 3.

¹ Developed with our County Durham Together partners, the Vision describes what we want the county to look like over the next decade and beyond.

- 15 The plan remains a high-level document - designed to give the reader an immediate sense of our strategic direction and what we are intending to do. Our priority themes (our economy, our environment, our people, our communities and our council), and their supporting objectives remain unchanged:

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Our economy | Capturing our contribution to the more and better jobs ambition within the Vision, together with our agenda as set out in our Inclusive Economic Strategy. |
| Our people | Capturing our contributions to the long and independent lives ambition within the Vision, together with our priorities set out in the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy. |
| 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. |
| Our environment | Capturing our priorities and plans around a climate emergency and an ecological emergency together with our role in waste management, pollution and custodianship of the natural environment. |
| Our council | Capturing our 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. |

- 16 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 for each objective.

- 17 Our refreshed plan is based around 55 priority actions, 14 more than last year.

- 18 We rolled over 32 priorities from last year's plan. Thirteen remain the same and retain the original wording. We have reworded 16 to make it clearer what we are trying to achieve and /or reflect progress made to date. Three priorities were expanded, for example, 'Decarbonisation of council buildings' now includes both 'buildings and operations.'

- 19 We added new priorities in response to the public consultation and service engagement that focus on improving the condition of our highways network, reforming buses with better service provision, helping nature recover, enhancing our natural environment, reducing homelessness, targeting environmental crime, improving care options whilst reducing high-cost permanent care solutions, and using technology to make our services both effective and efficient.
- 20 We deleted 5 priorities. These are covered by existing priorities, are complete (for example, our corporate volunteering scheme) or have been replaced by new priorities.
- 21 We combined some priorities as there were similarities between what the original priorities were trying to achieve. This reduced four original priorities to two new priorities.
- 22 We will continue to measure progress in achieving our ambitions, objectives and priorities through our performance framework - and report and share publicly through the quarterly Corporate Performance Report.
- 23 Most indicators within the framework remain unchanged from the previous plan. But there have been some tweaks to reflect the changes to our priorities.
- 24 However, we have changed the structure of our performance framework with indicators categorised as either primary (headline measures linked to achieving the priority) or secondary (reflect our demand pressures). We are developing targets for primary indicators based on local and national performance. We will complete this by March 2026 and targets will be included in future refreshed plans.
- 25 Our public consultation survey included questions about our communication. Respondents highlighted the topics they would like to hear more about – most of which are already regularly provided through our corporate reporting channels such as our website, our corporate publications such as Durham County News, our performance report, our social media channels, and regular updates and announcements on council services via regional media (TV, radio, press).
- 26 We also provide more localised information. For example, we have individual Facebook accounts for every Area Action Partnership, Neighbourhood Wardens area and Leisure Centre, and for venues such as our theatres. We are continuing to roll-out ownership of social media content to our services, and moving away from more traditional updates to shorter, snappier content. This increased accessibility means our messages reach more people.

- 27 We recognise that one size does not fit all. Our approach to wellbeing ensures we target support towards those most in need, whilst building capacity and resilience. We will continue to work with other organisations to reduce duplication and ensure greater impact. We will also work with service users and interested parties such as parents and carers to develop and shape services and initiatives. We are committed to doing things with communities rather than to them.
- 28 As a public authority, we must set equality objectives (as set out in the Equality Act 2010). These equality objectives must be reviewed every four years. The next review will be in 2028. These are also incorporated into the plan.

Best Value Standards

- 29 We are a well-functioning council (as described in [statutory guidance²](#)) and display certain characteristics. In relation to organisational planning, this includes:
- (a) an organisational-wide approach to continuous improvement, driven by an established transformation function or programme, with frequent monitoring, performance reporting and updating of the corporate and improvement plans;
 - (b) a shared vision for the local area which has been co-produced with partners, businesses and communities to maximise resources and ensure best value across service areas;
 - (c) members who provide quality leadership by setting a clearly articulated, achievable and prioritised vision for officers to follow that puts place and local people at its heart. Senior officers have the capacity and capability to provide the council with effective strategic direction;
 - (d) early and meaningful engagement and effective collaboration with communities to identify and understand local needs and assets, and in decisions that affect the planning and delivery of services. In some cases, this involves the co-design and/or co-production of services;
 - (e) a corporate plan that is evidence based, current, realistic and enables the whole organisation's performance to be measured and held to account. The authority's financial strategy and delivery arrangements are aligned with priorities in the corporate plan, and respond appropriately to local need, including the plans of partners and stakeholders;

² [Best Value Standards and Intervention](#)

- (f) financial strategy and budgets that are clearly aligned with strategic priorities and a robust process for reviewing and setting the budget;
- (g) service plans clearly linked to our priorities, strategic plans and longer-term planning – a golden thread that runs through to individual objectives and accountability;
- (h) partners and local residents are involved in developing indicators and targets, and monitoring and managing lack of performance. The council may be beginning to experiment with more participative forms of decision making.

Next Steps

- 30 Once the Local Government Finance Settlement has been confirmed (expected December), we will be able to update the finance sections of our plan. However, this will not be until January.
- 31 Subject to Cabinet's endorsement, the draft plan will progress to full Council for approval on 19 February 2025.

Conclusion

- 32 The draft Council Plan 2025-2029 contained in Appendix 3 sets out our priorities, key programmes of work and associated performance management arrangements for the forthcoming four years.
- 33 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 \(2024 – 2028\)](#)

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 (MTFP), 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 Durham Vision. The Vision 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 every four years. 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: Council Plan 2024 – 2028 Consultation Feedback

Public Survey responses

1. 307 people responded to our public consultation survey.
2. A breakdown of the characteristics of the responders is as follows:

Status

| | | |
|---|-----|-----|
| Resident | 193 | 63% |
| Employee | 99 | 32% |
| Community or voluntary organisation/group | 3 | 1% |
| Business | 2 | 1% |
| Statutory Organisation | 2 | 1% |
| Town or Parish Council | 1 | 0% |
| Elected member | 1 | 0% |
| Other | 3 | 1% |
| Not answered | 3 | 1% |

Gender

| | | |
|--------------|-----|-----|
| Male | 98 | 36% |
| Female | 171 | 64% |
| Not answered | 38 | 12% |

Age

| | | |
|--------------|----|-----|
| Over 75 | 5 | 2% |
| 65-74 | 29 | 9% |
| 55-64 | 83 | 27% |
| 45-54 | 64 | 21% |
| 35-44 | 65 | 21% |
| 25-34 | 24 | 8% |
| 18-24 | 2 | 1% |
| Under 18 | 2 | 1% |
| Not answered | 33 | 11% |

Do you consider yourself to be a disabled person?

| | | |
|--------------|-----|-----|
| No | 217 | 71% |
| Yes | 49 | 16% |
| Not answered | 41 | 13% |

Religion or belief

| | | |
|-----------|-----|-----|
| Christian | 155 | 50% |
| Agnostic | 1 | 0% |
| Buddhist | 1 | 0% |

| | | |
|--------------|-----|-----|
| Muslim | 1 | 0% |
| Pagan | 1 | 0% |
| Sikh | 1 | 0% |
| Spiritualist | 1 | 0% |
| No religion | 101 | 33% |
| Not answered | 45 | 15% |

Ethnicity

| | | |
|------------------------|-----|-----|
| White British | 255 | 83% |
| White Non-British | 5 | 2% |
| Asian or Asian British | 3 | 1% |
| Black or Black British | | 0% |
| Arab or Middle Eastern | | 0% |
| Mixed Race | | 0% |
| Travelling Community | 1 | 0% |
| Other | 1 | 0% |
| Not answered | 42 | 14% |

Sexual orientation

| | | |
|-----------------------|-----|-----|
| Heterosexual/straight | 231 | 75% |
| Gay or lesbian | 9 | 3% |
| Bisexual | 1 | 0% |
| Other | 1 | 0% |
| Not answered | 65 | 21% |

3. Our survey consisted of eight questions. The first five questions focused on whether our priorities were the right ones, and the final three questions focused on how we can better communicate our ambitions and successes.
4. Feedback received for each question, and our response, is set out below. In some cases this includes alterations made as part of the service engagement.

For each of the ambitions, please tell us if you think these are the right priorities. Would you change or remove any of these priorities? Is there anything missing?

5. 307 people answered this question. Of these, 225 suggested at least one amendment (73%).
6. We can breakdown the responses by ambition, i.e. our economy, our environment, our people, our communities, our council.
7. Of those who stated they wanted to make a change, just under half (46%) focused on a single ambition. Five percent wanted to change priorities linked to every ambition.

Q1. Our Economy

8. 133 respondents wanted to change at least one of the priorities supporting the ambition of Our Economy.

- **Supporting people into education, training, jobs and to excel in their careers (five responses).**

Consultation Feedback:

Respondents felt this priority should be more specific. All referenced the need to help young people. There was a specific link to reducing re-offending by helping those furthest away from the labour market (such as young people not in education, employment or training, ex-offenders and people released from prison). Respondents suggested more apprenticeships, schools and businesses creating meaningful work experience, a dedicated careers service and more support for people with literacy, numeracy and digital skills.

Our response:

This priority's wording has been changed to clarify 'people' refers to both young people and adults, include employment and self-employment, and to emphasise our focus on those with the greatest need.

- **Attracting additional businesses and jobs to strategic employment sites at Durham City Innovation District, Forrest Park, Jade Business Park, Integra 61, and the North East Technology Park (NETPark) (five responses).**

Consultation Feedback:

Respondents questioned the need for strategic employment sites. They felt smaller employment sites are able to offer a broad range of business opportunities and jobs, and that we should be encouraging businesses and jobs into towns and villages.

Our response:

Our Inclusive Economic Strategy sets out what our economy needs so everybody can benefit from growth and the county's success. The strategy is based on an Economic Review which provides a robust understanding of the economy's strengths and weaknesses, and the best opportunities to support future economic growth. This has led to the need for strategic employment sites. We will therefore be keeping this priority.

- **Investing in opportunities to regenerate and improve the vibrancy of towns and villages (eight responses).**

Consultation Feedback:

Although respondents supported the priority, they felt it was not specific enough in terms of which locations would benefit. Some respondents felt their local area did not receive as much funding as other areas and was being 'left behind'. It was suggested that the priority be widened to include Durham City.

Our response:

We recognise the need for investment countywide, particularly in smaller towns and villages. We have adopted a new approach to empower our communities to shape the future of their towns and villages. This involves engaging with local people, businesses, and other stakeholders to establish a shared vision for each place. The resulting Strategic Place Plans (previously master plans) are live documents and supported by a combination of a spatial plan, investment plan and delivery plan ([link](#)). In relation to Durham City, we are developing a multi-stakeholder 'Durham City Vision' and action plan. We have reworded the priority to make it clearer.

- **Delivering strategic infrastructure including road, rail and broadband upgrades (seven responses)**

Consultation Feedback:

Most respondents felt we should focus on existing infrastructure. One respondent felt infrastructure should be 'sustainable' and questioned why we were building more roads instead of reducing traffic. And one respondent requested more detail so they could see what is being delivered where.

Our response:

Our Inclusive Economic Strategy sets out what our economy needs so everybody can benefit from growth and the county's success. The strategy is based on an Economic Review which provides a robust understanding of the economy's strengths and weaknesses, and the best opportunities to support future economic growth. This has led to the need for strategic infrastructure. We will therefore be keeping this priority.

To reflect public consultation in relation to the condition of the highway, we have added the following priority 'improve the condition of the highways network.'

- **Supporting new and growing enterprises, innovative businesses, and improved levels of business productivity (one response).**

Consultation Feedback:

The respondent suggested our priority should be to support all businesses.

Our response:

We have broadened this priority to capture our work encouraging individuals to start a business within the county.

- **Developing opportunity sectors (three responses).**

Consultation Feedback:

Two respondents suggested deleting this priority as they do not know what it means. The final respondent suggested more incentives for 'green' investment.

Our response:

'Green' jobs is one of the key areas of focus the council is targeting to maximise economic growth. Other areas include research and advanced manufacturing, life sciences and satellite applications sectors. We have changed the wording to make it clear what we mean by this priority.

- **Securing inward investments (one response).**

Consultation Feedback:

The respondent questioned what kind of investment is being secured as not all investment is good.

Our response:

We have changed the wording to clarify that the focus of this priority is attracting new businesses into the county and creating jobs.

- **Promoting the county to visitors, businesses, and investors (four responses).**

Consultation Feedback:

One respondent highlighted North Road provides a poor first impression for people arriving by bus or train. There was concern that increased tourism and investors could lead to more congestion and an increase in houses prices as more become holiday homes / lets.

Our response:

We are developing a multi-stakeholder 'Durham City Vision'. The action plan will include various public realm projects.

- **Develop the next phase of the 62-hectare Aykley Heads site to create a Durham Innovation District (14 responses).**

Consultation Feedback:

All respondents suggested deleting this priority. Most felt there were more appropriate locations in other areas with better transport links.

Our response:

Our Inclusive Economic Strategy sets out what our economy needs so everybody can benefit from growth and the county's success. The strategy is based on an Economic Review which provides a robust understanding of the economy's strengths and weaknesses, and the best opportunities to support future economic growth. Aykley Heads is part of this growth plan. We will therefore be keeping this priority.

- **Supporting the development of more visitor attractions and year-round tourism (five responses).**

Consultation Feedback:

Respondents felt we should focus on the attractions we already have and/or regenerating our towns and villages.

Our response:

Our Inclusive Economic Strategy sets out what our economy needs so everybody can benefit from growth and the county's success. The strategy is based on an Economic Review which provides a robust understanding of the economy's strengths and weaknesses, and the best opportunities to support future economic growth. Our arts, culture and tourism sectors have huge growth potential. We will therefore be keeping this priority.

9. We also received feedback which does not fit with our existing priorities within the 'Our Economy' ambition. We have reviewed this feedback as per the following paragraphs.

Consultation Feedback:

Our response:

We have added five new priorities to the council plan in line with comments received through the public consultation and which reflect our existing work. These are:

- Support the local economy and promote fair trading through effective business regulation to prevent e-crime, fraud, scams, illegal money lending, counterfeit and illicit supplies of goods and other unfair trading practices.
- Ensure a healthy and sustainable food chain for the benefits of consumers, legitimate businesses and the rural economy.

- Provide business advice and guidance to businesses and event organisers to promote better business compliance and protect public health and safety.
- Work with educational settings where appropriate to raise educational attainment for all.
- Support children and young people facing disadvantage to achieve the highest possible levels of educational attainment.

Q2. Our Environment

10. 120 respondents wanted to change at least one of the priorities supporting the ambition of Our Environment.

- **Move toward a carbon neutral County Durham by 2045 (one response).**

Consultation Feedback:

One respondent felt we should not be pursuing this ambition.

Our response:

We have replaced the words 'carbon neutral' with 'net zero' to match the terminology used in other documents linked to climate change, carbon reduction and sustainability. We have also added words to reflect our focus on increasing levels of nature recovery.

- **Continue to work with and encourage all residents and businesses to reuse, recycle, and adopt sustainable practices (nine responses).**

Consultation Feedback:

Respondents were supportive of this priority but wanted to the priority broadened to include specific actions such as food waste collections, free green waste / bulky waste collections, clothing donation points in the community, more recycling centres, with drop off points in smaller villages, and improved access to recycling facilities (particularly for those without their own transport). One respondent also suggested rewarding those who recycle and carry out educational campaigns across schools.

Our response:

We have considered the specific actions mentioned above at various times. It is worth noting that the county has more recycling centres than similar authorities and this provision was recently reviewed as part of the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) exercise. It was agreed to retain this provision as it is as this is the most cost-effective model. Our new site (Stainton Grove) has pedestrian access. And although we have assessed older HWRCs for

pedestrian access, it is not feasible / safe to install. The original priority is being retained with no change.

- **Reduce spikes in pollution experienced by certain areas at certain times (eight responses).**

Consultation Feedback:

There were two main comments. Some respondents thought the priority was too vague – which areas at which times. Others felt this priority was a duplication of our priority to improve the air quality of Durham City Centre.

Our response:

The priority has been deleted as we feel the action is adequately covered elsewhere.

- **Develop infrastructure to make cycling and walking viable modes of transportation and encourage residents to embrace it (24 responses).**

Consultation Feedback:

Respondents were broadly in favour of this priority but acknowledged this is difficult with such a vast county. Respondents did put forward suggestions to help with this priority - low traffic speeds in residential areas, a 'park and stride' option to support walking and cycling, and better integration of cycling and buses / rail.

However, many felt that walking and cycling are not always viable for those in rural areas with disabilities and reiterated the need for reliable public transport. And some respondents were concerned the council would introduce a scheme such as ULEZ and that there would be a cost to drivers.

One respondent felt the focus should be existing infrastructure, which should be inclusive to mobility scooters.

Our response:

Two new priorities relating to bus provision have been added to the council plan – one relating to bus reform and one to bus services. Our new 'Move Together' Strategy will encourage people to walk, cycle and run more often, and we have 11 local cycling / walking infrastructure plans which set out long-term development in place.

We have no plans to introduce a ULEZ scheme or similar.

Our new capital schemes are DDA compliant. Residents can also request improvements such as dropped kerbs / disabled access through our operational teams.

This priority is being retained with no changes.

- **Improve the air quality in Durham City Centre (17 responses).**

Consultation Feedback:

Respondents felt cheaper bus fares would make public transport more attractive which would help improve air quality. Some respondents were concerned the council would introduce a scheme such as ULEZ and that there would be a cost to drivers. One respondent asked if we could expand this to include other areas such as Seaham?

Our response:

Two new priorities relating to buses have been added to the council plan – one relating to bus reform and one to bus services. Improving air quality in Durham City remains a corporate priority with an action plan and air quality management area. We are currently revising the air quality action plan (happens every 5 years). We have no plans to introduce a ULEZ scheme or similar. The priority has been retained with no changes.

- **Decarbonisation of council buildings (nine responses).**

Consultation Feedback:

Most felt the priority is too narrow and should include other elements of council operations, not just buildings.

Our response:

We have broadened the priority so it includes both 'buildings and operations' and made clear our intention to make the council net zero by 2030.

- **Encourage the use of our natural environment to improve health and well-being (four responses).**

Consultation Feedback:

Respondents queried how this would happen. Would it be promoting the areas as they are or would it be by investing in these areas to improve and make more accessible.

Our response:

We have changed the wording of this priority to clarify our action. Managing, maintaining and improving our network of footpaths, bridleways and by-ways will allow more people to visit the outdoors to improve their health and wellbeing.

11. We also received feedback which does not fit with our existing priorities within the 'Our Environment' ambition. We have reviewed this feedback as per the following paragraphs.

Consultation Feedback:

Respondents also wanted us to prioritise actions to improve our natural environment. This included requests to cut grass and hedges less often, not use weedkiller, stop landowners burning heather, restore peatlands, plant more wildflowers on grass verges and disused land, carry out more creative planting in town centres, and develop more allotments on brown belt. One respondent suggested encouraging residents to take responsibility for local green areas (which could lead to savings for the council).

Respondents felt we could do more to protect rural areas and the green belt. Suggestions included policy changes for house building and conservation areas, redeveloping empty, older buildings instead of building new, creating more wildlife friendly areas, increasing tree planting, and new housing developments with enough parking so residents don't pave over gardens.

Respondents also wanted us to encourage energy efficiency through rewards and planning changes (e.g., all new builds to have) and to help those in terraced housing, without a drive or garage, access electric vehicle chargers.

Our response:

We have added three new priorities to the council plan in line with comments received through the public consultation and which reflect our existing work. These are:

- Implement a countywide Local Nature Recovery Strategy which sets out our priorities for nature recovery and wider environmental goals.
- Tackle biodiversity loss and protect our natural environment.
- Work with key strategic partners to replace technologies using fossil fuels with electrically powered equivalents, such as electric vehicles and heat pumps.

Q3. Our People

12. 53 respondents wanted to change at least one of the priorities supporting the ambition of Our People.

- **Ensure a joined-up service for health and social care (three responses).**

Consultation Feedback:

Respondents were unsure what this means for residents. Is it an improved service? A faster service?

Our response:

This is a key priority for the council and as such we will continue to work toward achieving this through focused actions in our service plans. We have changed the wording to 'work with our partners across health and social care to create better services based on local need.' This will make our priority clearer.

- **Reduce the harm caused by drug and alcohol addiction through targeted support and appropriate treatment programmes (two responses)**

Consultation Feedback:

Respondents felt there should be more focus on prevention and education.

Our response:

This action has been deleted as we feel it is covered by another existing priority – 'help people live well for longer by making smoking history, enabling healthy weight for all, improving mental health and reducing alcohol harms.' This will be achieved by actions which include prevention and education.

- **Improve health and well-being, with reduced health inequality (seven responses).**

Consultation Feedback:

Respondents were unsure what this means. Is it to make people healthier, happier? One respondent believed the council could not achieve this as they are not responsible for health care. And others raised concern that targeting children and young people who are overweight / obese could lead to eating disorders.

Our response:

We have a public health function. We have changed the wording to 'improve health and well-being, with reduced health inequality between people and communities.' This will make the priority clearer.

- **Safeguard vulnerable individuals from abuse and support victims of anti-social behaviour, crime and disorder (three responses).**

Consultation Feedback:

Respondents felt this priority should have a specific focus on prevention. One respondent requested that vulnerable people be expanded to include those with dementia.

Our response:

We have changed the wording of this priority to match the overarching strategic action of Anti-Social Behaviour strategy which

focuses on ‘improving lives through tackling anti-social behaviour, crime and disorder that impacts our communities.’ This priority will be achieved by actions which include prevention.

- **Ensure that we meet the needs of children and young people affected by domestic abuse in safe accommodation (two responses).**

Consultation Feedback:

One respondent suggested expanding this priority to include Violence Against Women and Girls. The other respondent suggested we make specific reference to cared-for children as too many end up in the criminal justice system. It was also suggested we changed the wording to “care for and protect the needs of young people...” as it sounds warmer and kinder.

Our response:

We have broadened this priority to include all children and young people. The new priority is ‘ensure that all children and young people are protected and, if necessary, provided with safe and loving homes.’ We also added a new priority to ‘adopt care experience as a protected characteristic.’

- **Increase benefit take-up to support people whose circumstances make them vulnerable (two responses)**

Consultation Feedback:

It was suggested that we consider changing the wording from benefit take-up to ‘access to welfare support’ as it sounds kinder and less process driven.

Our response:

We have changed ‘increase benefit take-up’ to ‘improve access to welfare, advice and guidance’.

- **Help people live well for longer by making smoking history, enabling healthy weight for all, improving mental health and reducing alcohol harms (two responses).**

Consultation Feedback:

One respondent suggested we should focus on promoting healthy lifestyles and encouraging people to take ownership of this in their lifestyle choices. Another felt we should have a more triangulated approach to mental ill-health – for example, we record suicides but do not follow-up those who attempted suicide.

Our response:

Although the priority is being retained with no change, we are looking at the comment relating to a triangulated approach to mental ill-health, outside of this process.

- **Develop family hubs and the best start in life programme to deliver integrated family support (no response)**

Consultation Feedback:

None

Our response:

The family hubs are now operational and our focus is now on delivering support. 'Develop' has therefore been changed to 'Deliver integrated family support through.'

- **Make better use of technology throughout our social care system helping people to live independently (one response).**

Consultation Feedback:

The respondent put forward alternative words – 'embrace technological advancements in social care that enable and prolong independent living.'

Our response:

We have combined this priority to other existing priorities which also help people to live independently. The single priority states we will 'help people live independently for longer through preventative services, better use of technology and more homes for older and disabled people.'

- **Deliver more homes for older and disabled people (five responses).**

Consultation Feedback:

Respondents felt that all new housing developments should include smaller purpose-built quality accommodation for young and older people, and they should have a pleasant external environment for stimulation and improved mental and physical health.

Our response:

We have combined this priority to other existing priorities which also help people to live independently. The single priority states we will 'help people live independently for longer through preventative services, better use of technology and more homes for older and disabled people.' We are looking at the comment relating to a pleasant external environment, outside of this process.

13. We also received feedback which does not fit with our existing priorities within the 'Our People' ambition. We have reviewed this feedback as per the following paragraphs.

Consultation Feedback:

Respondents suggested social care should be a priority due to its high spend, and suggested more support is needed for older and disabled people and more specialist care for younger people with dementia, specialist neuro-support (post-diagnosis autism and ADHD). They also wanted reduced waiting lists.

Our response:

We have added two new priorities to the council plan in line with comments received through the public consultation and which reflect our existing work. This is:

- Improve the care options available to people with a learning disability or mental health illness, and reduce high cost permanent care solutions.
- Ensure we have well-functioning care markets.

Q4. Our Communities

14. 122 respondents wanted to change at least one of the priorities supporting the ambition of Our Communities.

- **Better transport links in rural areas (eight responses).**

Consultation Feedback:

Respondents felt that buses need to be more reliable with more routes and better connectivity, at times when people want to travel, more affordable, and countywide not just rural areas. This would be of particular benefit to rural areas, outlying villages and for disabled people. One respondent questioned how this can happen if there is no funding.

Our response:

We have replaced this priority with two new priorities relating to buses. One relates to bus reform (and is being led by the North East Combined Authority), The other relates to investment in bus services and is being led by the council. Both priorities will be countywide.

- **More digital connectivity (two responses)**

Consultation Feedback:

Respondents felt that many residents do not have the digital skills to make use of this. And that the focus should be on 'greater, stronger and faster' rather than 'more'.

Our response:

We have expanded the priority so there is more focus on digital inclusion (both hardware and skills) as well as connectivity. We intend to change the wording to 'support greater digital inclusion through connectivity, hardware and skills.'

- **Community engagement and co-production (five responses)**

Consultation Feedback:

Most respondents felt that community engagement and involvement is more important than ever. However, not all respondents understood what this means.

Our response:

We have changed the wording of this priority to make it clearer what this means – 'work with our communities to jointly make decisions or create services that work for them.'

Continue to develop place based working arrangements, co-producing, designing and implementing area-based interventions to improve health, safety and wellbeing of the community, by building on our Area Action Partnerships and developing new local networks, supported by grant funding, to give our communities more say on local priorities.

- **Establishing local network panels to further engage and empower local communities (one response)**

Consultation Feedback:

Respondents felt that community engagement and involvement is more important than ever. One respondent was unsure how these panels fit into the infrastructure already in place.

Our response:

We continue to support community engagement and involvement. To make our aims clearer, we have changed the wording of this priority to 'continue building on our Area Action Partnerships with new community networks, supported by grant funding, to give our communities more say on local priorities.'

Continue to develop place based working arrangements, co-producing, designing and implementing area-based interventions to improve health, safety and wellbeing of the community, by building on our Area Action Partnerships and developing new local networks, supported by grant funding, to give our communities more say on local priorities.

- **Developing neighbourhood interventions to tackle low level crime and anti-social behaviour, housing and environmental issues to make our communities safer (four responses).**

Consultation Feedback:

One respondent felt there should be more emphasis on tackling anti-social behaviour as it has such a big impact on communities and residents' mental health. One respondent suggested we do this by tackling problematic tenants through our selective licensing scheme. Another suggested we adopt a zero-tolerance approach to begging, anti-social behaviour and petty crime linked to drug and alcohol addiction.

Our response:

This priority is being retained with no change. This is a place-based priority and complements our priority: 'improving lives through tackling anti-social behaviour, crime and disorder that impacts on our communities.'

- **£52 million leisure transformation programme with projects completed or underway at Abbey, Spennymoor, Teesdale and Peterlee Leisure Centres, a new track and pavilion at Shildon and permission approved for a new leisure, wellbeing hub and library at Bishop Auckland (14 responses).**

Consultation Feedback:

Respondents suggested more provision is needed including more facilities for children and young people, and a centralised club culture. Respondents also commented that leisure centres need to be affordable and good transport links are needed to get there.

Our response:

We have amended the wording to acknowledge the programme is now £62 million. We have also deleted those elements that have been completed to make it clear what is left to do. The comments relating to transport links will be covered under the new priorities relating to bus provision that have been added to the council plan.

- **Building more council homes (11 responses)**

Consultation Feedback:

Respondents supported this priority, but many felt it should be expanded to include affordable home and supported accommodation. It was also noted that housing is critical to reduce re-offending. Some respondents requested the priority be more specific – how many? For whom? One respondent felt we should focus on redeveloping existing areas instead of creating new, and

another that we need to consider regenerating, acquiring and demolishing dilapidated low demand housing around the county.

Our response:

We have retained the priority but changed 'homes' to 'houses.' Reference the feedback in relation to 'regenerating, acquiring and demolishing dilapidated low demand housing' – funding has now been secured and this will be happening in Horden.

- **Delivering the Bishop Auckland Heritage Zone, Future High Street Fund and Stronger Towns Fund (three responses).**

Consultation Feedback:

Respondents felt initiatives should be countywide rather than confined to one area. One respondent was unsure what this action was.

Our response:

The Bishop Auckland Heritage Action Zone and Future High Street Fund have been completed. We have added them to the achievement section of the new council plan with weblinks so more detail can be accessed. These have been removed from the priority to make it clear that only the Stronger Towns Fund Programme has yet to be achieved. Our Strategic Place Plans and the Durham City Vision will set out developments countywide.

- **Supply Seaham Garden Village development with geothermal heat from mine water treatment scheme (six responses)**

Consultation Feedback:

One respondent felt this priority would sit better under 'our environment'. Another asked why this is priority. The third questioned whether this will be happening in other areas.

Our response:

This priority has links to both 'our environment' and 'our communities'. It is a flagship project which will be a blueprint for further rollout so we intend to keep the priority as it is. Heat networks, the lowest cost solution for decarbonising heat, can connect to different heat sources such as deep geothermal, sewage, river etc. Each source is assessed so the lowest cost network can be constructed. We have identified five Heat Network Zones (HNZ) (Durham City, Seaham, Newton Aycliffe, Chester le Street and Peterlee). Regulation to enable councils to mandate connection for non-commercial buildings and new construction in HNZs is expected in 2025. We are also looking at a mine water project in Horden which is community led and driven.

- **Introduce a corporate employee volunteering scheme in Durham County Council (five responses).**

Consultation Feedback:

Respondents had opposing views about this. Some felt employees volunteering in council time meant taxpayers are paying for people to do other things. One respondent suggested a region-wide scheme for anyone to participate in.

Our response:

The scheme has now been introduced so the priority has been deleted.

15. We also received feedback which does not fit with our existing priorities within the 'Our Community' ambition. We have reviewed this feedback as per the following paragraphs.

Consultation Feedback:

Respondents wanted more emphasis on clean, tidy, well-maintained communities. With less litter, fly-tipping, dog-fouling, graffiti and general untidiness, and fewer overgrown bushes and trees. Suggestions to achieve included more litter and dog bins, more frequent litter-picking, more community projects such as scrub clearance, and using CCTV and local community support for enforcement.

Our response:

We have added five new priorities to the council plan in line with comments received through the consultation and which reflect our existing work. These are:

- Work with our communities to encourage everyone to play a part in enhancing the local environment.
- Reduce environmental crime through improved intelligence, greater education and awareness, and tougher enforcement measures.
- Building resilience within communities against crime, disorder and impact from major incident.
- Work with partners to assess and improve the standards and quality of student accommodation and contribute to the development of a Student Wellbeing Strategy.
- Deliver a range of targeted interventions to improve quality of housing and living standards in the private sector particularly in areas of deprivation and health inequalities.

Consultation Feedback:

Respondents also wanted community facilities that support children and young people with things to do, help tackle loneliness of older people, and support new mothers and their babies. More youth clubs, sports

and art activities were suggested to keep young people active and away from anti-social behaviour.

Our response:

We believe that community facilities is adequately covered by existing actions. But we have proposed adding the additional priority which reflects the work we are doing through our homelessness and rough sleeping strategy.

- Reduce homelessness through targeted early intervention, making more homes available and improving access for our most vulnerable households.

Q5. Our Council

16. 54 respondents wanted to change at least one of the priorities supporting the ambition of Our Council.

- **Balancing our budget (four responses)**

Consultation Feedback:

Four people who commented on this priority. One believed we can't deliver our services and still balance the budget. One believed we should provide greater financial support for carers, adult social care, early years and children, school building upgrades, and children with special educational needs. One felt the priority should focus on getting the best out of the budget. And one suggested we work more with other councils to save on costs of staff, software and buildings.

Our response:

The council is legally required to set an annual budget that is 'balanced'. This means the amount we expect to spend is no more than the amount we expect to receive. Balancing our budget is becoming increasingly difficult so we will be retaining this priority.

- **Providing high quality, value for money services (six responses).**

Consultation Feedback:

Respondents felt we could save money with better use of existing experienced staff rather than external companies, marketing and consultancy.

Our response:

The council is a well-functioning authority and operates in line with Best Value Standards. We strive for continuous improvement in the way we carry out our functions, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. We will retain this priority but

have reworded it to provide greater clarity of what we want to achieve.

We have also added a new action:

- Promote social value in procurement to maximise the County Durham pound.
- **Digital by Design – providing online services with an alternative for those unable to access the internet (seven responses).**

Consultation Feedback:

Most respondents felt we needed to keep alternatives as many people do not have the skills to use online services.

Our response:

We intend to delete this priority as it is an element of ‘providing high quality value for money services.’ We will address digital skills through our priority to ‘support greater digital inclusion through connectivity, hardware and skills.’ Technology is becoming increasingly important in all aspects of people’s lives, and we believe we can use technology to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of our services. We therefore intend to add a new priority to reflect this – ‘using technology to make our services both effective and efficient.’

- **Creating a more data-driven council (11 responses).**

Consultation Feedback:

Most respondents didn’t know what this meant or what benefit would be gained from adopting such an approach. Some respondents felt councils should be ‘person-centred’ and being ‘data-driven’ could mean staff not having time to support customers in the best way possible.

Our response:

We have reworded this priority to ‘maximise the benefits of the data we hold to help us drive better services and value for money.’ The new wording makes it clearer what we are trying to achieve.

- **A workforce that can meet future challenges (eight responses).**

Consultation Feedback:

Respondents suggested we should focus on developing our workforce, ensuring it is efficient and able to seize opportunities.

Our response:

The priority will be achieved by actions that include workforce development, efficiency measures and seizing opportunities, so the

existing wording is appropriate. However, we intend to combine this priority with another existing priority (health and well-being of our workforce) to create a single priority - 'a healthy workforce that can meet future challenges.' To focus on recruiting and retaining the best staff, we have added a new priority - Ensure the council is a 'employer of choice' in order to recruit and retain the best staff.

- **Health and wellbeing of our workforce – achieve Better Health at Work Award Ambassador Status (nine responses).**

Consultation Feedback:

Respondents recognised the need for work/life balance and for the workforce to be both healthy and happy. However, they felt 'Better Health at Work Award Ambassador Status' was a box-ticking exercise and/or a wasteful use of money.

Our response:

We are focused on the health and wellbeing of our workforce. 'Better Health at Work Award Ambassador Status' is only one element of this. We have combined this priority with another existing priority (a workforce that can meet future challenges) to create a single priority - 'a healthy workforce that can meet future challenges.'

Q6: Thinking about our priorities, which do you think residents would like to learn more about?

17. 307 people answered this question.
18. We can breakdown the responses by ambition, i.e. our economy, our environment, our people, our communities, our council. Most respondents said they would like to learn about more than one ambition.

| Our Economy | Our Environment | Our People | Our Communities | Our Council |
|-------------|-----------------|------------|-----------------|-------------|
| 176 | 183 | 195 | 233 | 177 |

34. 68 respondents suggested specific topics which they felt residents would benefit from knowing more about. These can be broadly categorised as follows:

| Priority or performance issue | Number | % |
|--|--------|-----|
| How the council spends its money | 20 | 29% |
| The difference the council makes. | 18 | 26% |
| What is happening in each of our communities | 13 | 19% |
| Environmental issues | 8 | 12% |

| | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|----|
| Employment and training opportunities | 4 | 6% |
| New housing development | 3 | 4% |
| Publish all consultation responses | 1 | 1% |
| Member voting record | 1 | 1% |

Our response:

Much of the information respondents suggested is already provided on a regular basis.

We use a range of corporate reporting channels - through our website, our corporate publications such as Durham County News, our performance report, our social media channels, and regular updates and announcements on council services via regional media (TV, radio, press).

Many of our social media channels are now localised. For example, we have individual Facebook accounts for each Area Action Partnership, Neighbourhood Wardens, each Leisure Centre and venues such as our theatres.

We are exploring ways to make information more visible. We have used weblinks extensively throughout our Council Plan to direct the reader to relevant supporting content on our website. For example, our achievement '[Increased our low-cost surplus food hubs \(The Bread Butter Thing\) to 20](#)' links to our webpage to 'help with food costs'.

Q7: How would you want us to share what people think about the quality of our services?

35 307 people answered this question. Just over a third (109 respondents) said they would like us to share information about the quality of our services (35%).

36 Of these, the majority suggested sharing the information digitally – most favoured publishing the information on our website and /or social media accounts. Some people suggested using both digital and non-digital channels – mainly due to a perceived view that not everybody is able to use digital methods.

| | number | % |
|---|-----------|------------|
| Digital | 95 | 72% |
| - Published on social media and/or our website. | 80 | 61% |
| - Email to residents. | 15 | 11% |
| Non-digital | 37 | 28% |

| | | |
|--|----|-----|
| - face to face (at public meetings or events). | 7 | 5% |
| - hard copies available to collect from community buildings. | 10 | 7% |
| - hard copies posted to residents. | 13 | 10% |
| - Other, e.g., TV, radio, newspapers, bus shelters | 7 | 5% |

Our response:

We continue to provide a range of mechanisms to share information. We are continuing to roll-out ownership of social media content to our services. We are moving away from more traditional updates to shorter, snappier content. This increased accessibility means our messages reach more people.

We are considering other non-digital communication methods - paper copies of our major strategies (such as the inclusive economic strategy) and documents (such as the corporate performance report) in all public facing council buildings. Better use of pop-ups and digital screens in our leisure centres and Customer Access Points.

Q8: Is the plan easy to read and easy to understand?

37 The vast majority of respondents found the plan both easy to read (87%) and easy to understand (81%).

| | Yes | No |
|--------------------|-----|-----|
| | 244 | 37 |
| Easy to read | 87% | 13% |
| | 225 | 52 |
| Easy to understand | 81% | 19% |

38 49 people suggested ways in which we could make the plan easier to read and understand.

Consultation Feedback

Nineteen respondents (39%) felt our wording could be simpler and more concise. Examples of phrases which made no sense to the reader includes 'Developing opportunity sectors' and 'securing inward investment'.

Our response:

We have committed to writing all council documents in plain English. Occasionally, more complex words and phrases are used in error. We

have corrected the examples used above and our communications team have proof-read the document to ensure all wording is non-technical and can be understood by everybody as far as possible.

Consultation Feedback

Seventeen respondents (35%) felt our plan would be enhanced if we included more detail as to what we were doing. This mainly related to people wanting to know where something would happen. For example, where would we improve bus services, where do we plan to build houses.

Our response:

Our plan is deliberately kept high level so it is easy to read. It has been designed to give the reader an immediate sense of our strategic direction and what we are intending to do. A range of supporting council and partnership strategies and council service plans will provide the detail of how we all deliver our priorities. Supporting strategies are named in the plan so that those wishing to receive further information can via hyperlinks or by contacting the council for accessible versions.

Consultation Feedback

Ten respondents (20%) suggested practical design changes to make the plan easier to read and understand. Suggestions were using videos to explain what we are trying to achieve, adding a summary page to the plan, and making it mobile phone friendly so people are read it on smaller screens.

Our response:

We have included a 'plan on a page' in this year's plan. This high-level summary will let people see at a glance, what we are trying to achieve. We are using animations to communicate with staff, our partners and the public.

Responses from the Children in Care Council.

- 39 The Children in Care Council (CICC) exists to give children in care and care-leavers a voice and help them to have a say in the way their care service is run.
- 40 All children and young people who are looked after across the county are automatically members of the CICC and can take part in discussions and issues raised.
- 41 We asked the CICC what they thought of the current Council Plan. Respondents were split into groups by age.

42 The younger group fed back important words and what they meant to them.

Motivational: this word was shared as an important word to explain what the plan could do.

Respect: Respecting what we can do for children and young people we care for.

Stigma: Use words to challenge stigma.

Kind: Words or sentences to show kindness of the council was view as important.

Caring: 'We are a caring council'.

Honest: Make sure the words are honest and can be followed by everyone.

Love: To love and care for all children and young people.

The following sentence was put forward to help us think about recognising children and young people in the plan. It was:

The plan is about everyone, helping children and young people we care for to be the best.

43 The older group stripped the plan back using a visual aid and shared their thoughts about the plan, including some sentences for consideration. Key points are:

- help care leavers with equipment, furniture, food plans, budgeting and life skills. Open new opportunities for all ages and all people. Open new centres so people can interact and socialise.
- support care leavers, by providing life skill sessions, provide leaving packages that include things to help them have an accommodation and provide centres that help people with everyday life.
- 'Our people are our children. We care for them and this plan is about them and their future'.
- 'We will support the young people in care to have a better future'.
- More clubs because some people may be bored in their house all the time, more money for college because people may not be able to afford it! Different activities, youth clubs, more help when buying a house.
- 'We as a council think children in care and leaving are important'.

- More community activities, more opportunities for people/youths, more job opportunities. To support care leavers.
 - 'I would like to recommend some of the following actions to benefit the care leavers, these include...life skills, packages including cheap food and some gardening practise to benefit their skills as well as an improvement in environment'.
- 44 We are currently defining a high-level priority relating to children in care. This will give greater visibility to these children and increase focus on their needs. The detail will be considered a part of the refresh of our corporate parenting strategy.
- 45 Children are a top priority for us, and our refreshed Council Plan includes priorities which reflect our commitment to create a nurturing environment where all children can grow, develop and thrive. Priorities which specifically impact Children in Care include:
- Ensure that all children and young people are protected and, if necessary, provided with safe and loving homes.
 - Adopt care experience as a protected characteristic.
 - Improve access to welfare, advice and guidance to support residents whose circumstances make them vulnerable.
 - Support children and young people facing disadvantage to achieve the highest possible levels of educational attainment.
 - Support young people and adults to move into education, training, employment and self-employment, prioritising those with the greatest need.

Overview and Scrutiny Feedback

- 46 The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (COSMB) reviewed the plan on 9th December, their comments are summarised below.

Comment:

Members raised concerns around the consultation and engagement process undertaken in preparing the draft council plan and whether it truly reflected the ambitions and priorities of the residents of County Durham and what the Council does for them.

Members indicated that the consultation process in respect of the council plan offered a real opportunity to make people aware of the

Council's responsibilities in terms of service delivery and its ability to do so under significant financial and budgetary pressures.

Response:

The Council Plan priorities align to the County Durham Vision for 2035 which had 392 online survey responses, 21 key stakeholder interviews and engaged 850 people through in person activities. The consultation on this year's refresh of the plan had over 300 responses, the majority of which provided valuable and constructive feedback that has been used in shaping this year's plan.

The Council is in the process of implementing a new public facing portal (Govocal), to house all consultation and engagement activity, as part of a range of measures to enhance the involvement of the public in service developments and decision making. In the early part of 2025, the launch will be publicised to encourage registration and promote how members of the public and organisations can be more involved in both formal and informal engagements with the council. The platform will also enable the authority to make better use of the information it receives.

The council plan is a high-level strategic document, however there is a list of services the council provides for residents on page 12 of the plan, which alongside appendix 2 (our achievements) clearly sets out what the Council does for residents.

Comment:

Members questioned the inclusion of achievements within the draft Council Plan as they considered that the plan should be forward-looking rather than backward looking.

Response:

The Council Plan has many audiences, from residents and communities, through to National Government and agencies, plus those wishing to invest in the area or inspect local provision. The plan seeks to balance messages of confidence in the Council's ability to deliver, alongside ambition for the future, whilst remaining realistic about the challenges faced by the Council.

Comment:

Having noted the considerable financial challenges facing the council, members questioned the costs associated with producing a "glossy" Council Plan document.

Response:

Considering the wide audience of the plan as described above, and a requirement to publish it on the internet, there is a need for a professional and accessible document. This document is produced in-house by officers and will have a very limited print run; therefore, costs will be minimal and far outweighed by the benefits.

Comment:

Members questioned the timing of the plan in light of the County Council elections in May 2025 when the newly elected council may have a different set of ambitions, priorities and targets.

Response:

The organisation has committed to an annual refresh of the Council Plan alongside the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP). This refresh meets that obligation and is seen as good practice across the sector. The process for refreshing the plan typically commences in the summer before approval the following year. This process will start again shortly after the elections and enable the new council to set the strategic direction.

Comment:

Members raised concerns around the deliverability of the council plan aims and ambitions considering uncertainty regarding County Council resources and ongoing budgetary pressures.

Response:

The plan is developed in parallel with the MTFP and as such takes into account financial pressures, it is therefore considered to be deliverable and realistic. Due to the requirement to have a refreshed plan in place for the start of the new financial year, this process must start in the summer, however on receipt of the Local Government Finance Settlement in December, the plan will be reviewed.

Appendix 3: Draft Council Plan 2025-29
