

Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
Committee Date:	7 July 2021
Agenda item name:	Progress update – Strategic Council Plan
Portfolio Holder:	Cllr Sally Longford, Deputy Leader of the Council, Ita O'Donovan and James Rhodes
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Presented by:	Cllr Sally Longford, Ita O'Donovan, James Rhodes

Summary of Issues:

In response to the findings of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) commissioned Non-Statutory Review (NSR), Nottingham City Council has adopted a comprehensive Recovery and Improvement Plan to address the issues highlighted by the Review.

The Recovery and Improvement Plan identifies a number of priority areas for the authority to deliver the necessary improvements in the way we operate, including **developing a new “Policy Framework” for the City Council, clearly setting out what our priorities are, and refreshing the existing Council Plan covering 2019-23 in light of the new context we are operating in.**

This report sets out more detail of the process to date leading to the current draft “Strategic Council Plan 2021-23”, and proposed next steps, ahead of formal adoption of a final version of the refreshed Plan at Full Council in September 2021 (as required by the NSR and Improvement and Assurance Board timescales).

Recommendations

That Overview & Scrutiny members:

- 1. Note the covering report and provide feedback on the process and methodology used to date for producing a draft “Strategic Council Plan 2021-23”**
- 2. Note and comment on the proposed next steps to take this work forward.**

Background

- 1.1 A refreshed Council Plan must deliver a revised policy framework for the City Council that a) articulates our priorities and b) sets out a clear vision

for the city which is both affordable, and deliverable within the context we find ourselves in (for example: a reduced funding envelope, recovering from the Covid-19 Pandemic, increasing demand for key statutory services).

- 1.2 The Improvement and Assurance Board has given a clear direction to the Council that a refreshed council plan must be more strategic in nature, setting out a series of high level outcomes for the city (and city council), and including more on the statutory services we are required to provide such as Children's services and Adult Social Care.
- 1.3 It also needs to include detail on how we will manage our finances to ensure we are sustainable over the medium to long term, and how the council will deliver on the outcomes and priorities in the Plan.
- 1.4 Accordingly, the new "Strategic Council Plan" (SCP) covering the period 2021-2023 moves the Council away from previous Corporate Plans which have listed much of our activity, and instead sets out a more strategic overview of the work of the Council in Nottingham that will be more readily understood by citizens and partners.
- 1.5 Delivery of the Plan will be supported by a culture change programme for the organisation, and a more rigorous performance management and reporting process to hold people to account for delivery of the contents.

Review of Best Practice

- 1.6 To support the refresh of the current Council Plan 2019-23, a desk-top review of best practice across the Core City local authorities (and other selected local authorities), was undertaken, examining their approaches to Council/Corporate/Strategic Plans.
- 1.7 The Core Cities are: Belfast, Birmingham, Bristol, Cardiff, Glasgow, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham and Sheffield.
- 1.8 This then fed into the refresh process, alongside the views of the Executive, and the requirements of Improvement and Assurance Board as set out in the Recovery and Improvement Plan.

Process and Governance

- 1.9 Whilst the best practice review was underway, the Executive reviewed the existing 2019-23 Council Plan commitments and identified those that would be either:
 - Retained in full;
 - Amended/re-scoped (either in terms of scope or timing);
 - Removed because they have already been achieved; or,
 - Removed because they are no longer deliverable in the current climate.

There are around 140 commitments that have been retained or amended. 21 have been removed due to affordability, and 27 listed as complete.

- 1.10 Executive Panel subsequently discussed and agreed the changes to these commitments on **18 March 2020**.
- 1.11 Following this, officers drafted various iterations of a potential refreshed Council Plan, following a clear and agreed governance route to report on this workstream to the Corporate Leadership Team, Leadership Group and Executive Panel at key milestone/decision points.
- 1.12 In between those decision making meetings, officers regularly briefed the programme sponsor (Mel Barrett) and Lead Portfolio Holder (Cllr Longford) for the workstream, ensuring they were consulted ahead of any key activity and decisions, and kept informed of progress appropriately throughout.
- 1.13 Regular workstream updates were also submitted to the (now fortnightly), Recovery Plan Officer Working Group and as appropriate to the Improvement and Assurance Board.

2. Draft Strategic Council Plan and Performance Management Framework

Draft Strategic Council Plan

- 2.1 The draft plan is structured around 11 priority outcomes set by the Executive following discussions with them:

Our Priority Outcomes:

- Clean and Connected Communities.
 - Keeping Nottingham Working.
 - Carbon Neutral by 2028.
 - Safer Nottingham.
 - Child-Friendly Nottingham.
 - Healthy and Inclusive.
 - Keeping Nottingham Moving.
 - Improve the City Centre.
 - Better Housing.
 - Financial Stability.
 - Serving People Well.
- 2.2 Each outcome is a separate section in the document, following a consistent format:
- Overview of the outcome and why it is a priority
 - What we have done
 - What we will do
 - How we will measure improvement
 - Key activities to support the outcome - this is where existing Council Plan 2019-23 commitments are set out.
- 2.3 A representative sample of key statutory duties has been mapped to the outcomes to provide a summary of the full breadth of delivery for which the Council is responsible. This is provided in summary in order to keep

the document strategic in nature, as it would be impractical to list all statutory duties and indicators.

Performance Management Framework

- 2.4 Underpinning delivery of our outcomes is a comprehensive Performance Management Framework (PMF), which incorporates the commitments from the draft SCP, as well as a representative selection of statutory duties and strategic indicators. This collection of performance metrics will be reported on through the Council's online performance system, Pentana, and will be discussed monthly at Directorate Leadership Team (DLT) meetings.
- 2.5 A smaller number of the indicators, deemed 'key performance indicators' (KPIs) of the performance of each directorate, will be reported each quarter to the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT), Portfolio Holders and Exec Panel by exception. Narrative will also be provided to give context to the data, to provide better understanding of the reason for the RAG ratings.
- 2.6 Automated reporting, using the information officers have entered into Pentana, will be developed giving easy access to performance intelligence, supporting service areas to meet their targets and milestones.
- 2.7 Early identification of any indicators and actions where performance is not progressing as planned will be made possible through consistent and regular performance monitoring and discussion across the directorates. This in turn will enable more timely interventions and remedial action to be taken to help get performance back on track.

Organisation and Culture

- 2.7 Another key component underpinning the delivery of the SCP is behaviour and culture change (Theme 6) which will provide and embed the link between employees individual contributions and the high level outcomes in the plan.

3. Ensuring Deliverability/Affordability of the Strategic Council Plan

- 3.1 Deliverability of the refreshed plan will be assured through an integrated approach to service planning and development of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and Plan (2022/23 – 2025/26) (MTFS/P). The purpose of the MTFP is to provide the strategic financial framework and a forward looking approach to achieving long term sustainability. Central to ensuring the delivery of the Council's outcomes is that we take this longer term perspective on our performance management, budgeting and forecasting and have plans in place to close funding gaps.
- 3.2 Service planning will be crucial in assessing if activity and commitments in the plan can be delivered. The MTFP needs to confirm the anticipated

funding gap for 2022/23 and beyond and the proposals to bridge that gap through service redesign and renewal. A consistent approach to in-year (2021/22) service planning will take place before the end of June to test deliverability of the SCP against existing 2021/22 budgets. This exercise will ensure a deliverable SCP within the already allocated resources for 2021/22. It is upon this basis that the SCP will be signed off at full council in September 2021.

- 3.3 Subsequently - between June and September – a new, fuller, service renewal and redesign process will be undertaken as part of the development of the MTFS/P, which will inform service plans for 2022/23.

Next Steps

- 3.4 In ensuring that the Plan is approved, deliverable and costed its development is being integrated with development of Service Plans (SPs), the implementation of the Performance Management Framework (PMF) and four-year Medium Term Financial Strategy and Plan (MTFS/MTFP). A three step process is in place in relation to all aspects (SCP through to MTFP):

1. Service Planning and Gap Analysis:

- Agree a detailed process, milestones and guidance (deliverable 1a, May 2021) for service planning and costing proposals within an agreed affordable envelope (with in-year service planning based on existing 2021/22 budgets)
- Agree a draft Strategic Council Plan and updated gap analysis (deliverable 1b, June 2021) – A draft (uncosted) Strategic Council Plan will be produced with public consultation on the vision and outcomes. The consultation will launch week commencing 21st June and run until 30th July¹. An updated analysis of the financial gap based on a review of core income and known and expected pressures and risks will also be produced. This work will result in a verification or restatement of the likely range of financial gaps in each year 2022/23 to 2025/26
- Develop robust in-year service plans (deliverable 1c, late June 2021) – In year service planning will be undertaken to test the deliverability of 2021/22 activity.
- Finalise Strategic Council Plan for sign off at full Council in September 2021 (deliverable 1d) – this is informed by the development of robust in-year service plans to be completed by end of June in deliverable 1c above.

¹ The consultation survey can be found here:
<https://wh1.snapsurveys.com/s.asp?k=162314576023>

2. Development of MTFSP and Consultation:

- Undertake service renewal and redesign work to inform future service plans (deliverable 2a, June to September 2021). A series of member/officer workshops will be held to identify and develop specific proposals for a renewal (transformation) programme aimed at delivering financially sustainable services – providing improved outcomes for citizens and lower cost. The renewal (transformation) processes will be fully put in place.
- Draft MTFP for consultation (deliverable 2b, October 2021) – A draft MTFP (2022/23- 2025/26) will be produced for public consultation (12 weeks – October to December 2021), with the prime objective of gaining feedback from the public, businesses, partners, trades unions and Overview & Scrutiny Committee on the detailed proposals for delivering the high level outcomes. The plan will be aligned to, and consistent with, future service plans to confirm affordability. Draft Equality Impact Assessments and Implementation Plans will be published coterminously with consultation.

3. Review and Finalisation of MTFP:

- Review consultation responses and finalise Service Plans and MTFP (deliverable 3a, January 2022). The responses from consultation will be analysed and proposals re-shaped as appropriate. This may entail refinements to service plans to maintain alignment with the MTFP.
- Agree MTFP (deliverable 3b, February to March 2022). A final MTFP (2022/23- 2025/26) will be recommended and agreed which demonstrates that the council has robust plans to address any funding gaps over the period 2022/23 – 2025/26 whilst meeting the aspirations of the Strategic Council Plan and the details set out in Service Plans.

3.5 Recommendation 2: It is recommended that Overview and Scrutiny members note and comment on the proposed next steps

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