

**Executive Board
August 2021**

Subject:	Draft Strategic Council Plan 2021-23
Corporate Director(s)/Director(s):	Clive Heaphy, Interim Corporate Director of Finance and Resources Ita O'Donovan, Director of Strategy and Policy
Portfolio Holder(s):	Councillor Sally Longford, Portfolio Holder for Energy, Environment and Waste Services
Report author and contact details:	Dean Goodburn, Policy and Performance dean.goodburn@nottinghamcity.gov.uk James Rhodes, Head of Analysis and Insight james.rhodes@nottinghamcity.gov.uk
Other colleagues who have provided input:	Shelley Harrod, Research and Engagement and Consultation Manager James Schrodel, Policy and Performance Manager Elaine Fox, Policy and Performance
Subject to call-in: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Key Decision: <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No Criteria for Key Decision: (a) <input type="checkbox"/> Expenditure <input type="checkbox"/> Income <input type="checkbox"/> Savings of £1,000,000 or more taking account of the overall impact of the decision and/or (b) Significant impact on communities living or working in two or more wards in the City <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	
Type of expenditure: <input type="checkbox"/> Revenue <input type="checkbox"/> Capital	
Total value of the decision: Nil	
Wards affected: All	
Date of consultation with Portfolio Holder(s):	
Relevant Council Plan Key Theme: Nottingham People <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Living in Nottingham <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Growing Nottingham <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Respect for Nottingham <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Serving Nottingham Better <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

Summary of issues (including benefits to citizens/service users):

As part of the Recovery and Improvement Plan, the Council is required to review its policy framework within the light of its new operating context. In response, a refreshed draft Strategic Council Plan 2021-23 (SCP) has been produced, to replace the existing Council Plan 2019-23 (Appendix 1).

The revised draft details the vision, high level outcomes and priorities for the Council over the next two years. It includes commitments from the existing plan for 2019-23 that have been reviewed against the funding and resources available to deliver them, alongside the Council's statutory and transformation activity that supports the new headline outcomes.

The draft SCP provides a greater focus on the core, statutory services and activities the Council needs to provide to support local people, places and partners.

In addition, the Council has undertaken a period of consultation on the proposed draft plan, involving Council employees, the public and partners. Consultation on the plan is almost complete, with a final engagement session with partners, businesses, and the community and voluntary sector to come, but the interim feedback on the draft plan is presented here for Executive Board's consideration (Appendix 2).

The draft plan is still evolving, with feedback from the Improvement and Assurance Board and the conclusion of the consultation process to be incorporated into the final document ahead of consideration at Full Council on 13 September 2021.

Exempt information: None

Recommendation(s):

- 1** To recommend that the draft Strategic Council Plan 2021-23 is approved by Full Council on 13 September 2021, subject to any further changes that may be made at the conclusion of the consultation, or following feedback from the Improvement and Assurance Board.
- 2** To comment on the feedback to date from the consultation exercise with Council employees and the public on the contents of the draft Strategic Council Plan 2021-23, and to make any suggestions for changes to the content of the draft as a result.

1 Reasons for recommendations

- 1.1 The existing Council Plan 2019-23 was formally approved at Full Council on 11 November 2019.
- 1.2 That plan set out our vision for improving Nottingham whilst keeping citizens at the heart of everything the Council does.

- 1.3 The overall vision and ambition for the city are unchanged, but the wider context in which the organisation is operating has changed dramatically since 2019, following the critical Public Interest Report (PIR) into Robin Hood Energy and the Non-Statutory Review (NSR) of the Council, significant real terms funding reductions for local government, and the ongoing social and economic impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 1.4 In light of this, it is appropriate that the Council reviews the existing Council Plan 19-23 and revise it to take account of the changed operating context, to ensure that we are responding appropriately to the new context whilst maintaining our ambitions for Nottingham and for local people.
- 1.5 The draft Strategic Council Plan 2021-23 sets out a vision and revised set of key outcomes and priorities that the Council believes will improve the lives of local people and support Nottingham's recovery from the ongoing Covid-19 Pandemic.

2 Background (including outcomes of consultation)

- 2.1 Following the publication of the PIR in August 2020 and the Council's Action Plan in response, the Council was subject to a rapid review on behalf of the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). That review concluded in November 2020.
- 2.2 As a result of the review, the Council was required to produce a three year Recovery and Improvement Plan (R&IP), setting out the actions we will take and the key milestones we will meet to restore the financial viability of the Council's capital programme and revenue budget.
- 2.3 Progress against delivery of the recovery plan is overseen and considered by an external Improvement and Assurance Board (IAB), and progress updates from the IAB formally submitted to the Secretary of State with their observations.
- 2.4 As an organisation, the Council is clear that we need to achieve a sustainable, balanced budget, in the context of a refreshed policy framework and direction for the Council, with transparent, effective and efficient decision-making, and having regard to the resources that are available to us to deliver this on behalf of the people of Nottingham.
- 2.5 Good progress has been already made towards achieving this position, but we are not complacent; the wider operating context is extremely challenging, and there is still more for the Council to do if we are to successfully deliver the scale of improvement required within the timescale set out in the recovery plan.
- 2.6 A key aspect of delivering the improvement needed is developing a refreshed policy framework for the Council: 'the Strategic Council Plan', which reaffirms the organisation's vision and priorities over the next two years, taking full account of our absolute commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion, whilst also ensuring our priorities are deliverable within a reduced funding envelope.

The refreshed Strategic Council Plan 2021-23

- 2.7 The new Strategic Council Plan (SCP) must deliver a refreshed policy framework and set out a clear vision for the city for the next two years which is affordable and deliverable within a reduced funding envelope.
- 2.8 The draft SCP is a strategic, 'one-council' document that incorporates the Council's statutory responsibilities and also reflects the key outcomes and priorities of the Council's ruling group.
- 2.9 It was created following a review of previous political commitments and an extensive internal development process that included reviews and feedback from the IAB.
- 2.10 The draft SCP meets the requirements of the R&IP and IAB by enabling:
- A clear vision for the City and City Council, and details of our strategic priorities for the next two years.
 - A robust policy framework to deliver against those priorities within the available resources.
 - The establishment of high level outcomes, with a series of strategic priorities and detailed, measurable activities underneath to support each outcome, so that services can be better held to account for their contribution to the Council's overall strategic goals.
 - More effective performance management at all levels through a 'golden thread' that runs from the overall strategic aims and objectives at the top of the organisation, and the outcomes of the refreshed Council Plan, down to service plans and individual colleague appraisal objectives.
 - A strong link to financial performance, corporate risk and our workforce and corporate health, alongside more effective internal controls and management arrangements.
 - Greater clarity to employees, citizens, businesses and other key stakeholders on what our priorities are and where our resources are being directed over the next two years.
 - The governance and accountability mechanisms needed to ensure the delivery of the plan and to enable citizens and others to hold us to account.
- 2.11 Alongside the revised Plan, a comprehensive PMF will underpin delivery of the plan, and provide the Corporate Leadership Team, Leadership Group, the IAB and public with the necessary assurance that performance management is being undertaken by the authority in a rigorous and transparent way, with appropriate oversight and reporting of the performance of the organisation in place.
- 2.12 Significant changes have been made to the draft Plan following the conclusion of a robust service planning process. As set out at June's IAB, the in-year service planning process was the key vehicle by which commitments in the plan were tested for deliverability against known 2021/22 budgets. This work does not take into account the currently forecast overspend which is on a significant scale to present tangible risks. Nor does it take into account the know reductions of more than 10% in the Council's budgets for 2022/23.

2.13 The service planning process identified any existing commitments that were deemed not to be resourced and therefore required a review by the accountable Director and Portfolio Holder, in order to either remove the commitment or re-scope it to make it deliverable within 2021/22 approved resources.

Consultation on the Draft SCP

2.14 The Council has consulted extensively on the draft SCP, with local people, employees and key partners, actively seeking their views to inform and improve the draft SCP and the priorities and activities that flow from it.

2.15 Consultation has taken place through a mix of online questionnaires and online engagement sessions (in light of Covid-19), with the senior leadership of the organisation: the Leader, Cllr David Mellen; Deputy Leader, Cllr Sally Longford; and Chief Executive, Mel Barrett.

2.16 Engagement sessions have taken place with Council employees and members of the public, with a final session for partners scheduled to take place on 9 August.

2.17 An additional feedback session took place with the Leader and young people (Nottingham Youth Cabinet) in July.

2.18 Overall, the vision and eleven headline outcomes in the draft Plan were endorsed by the majority of respondents amongst both Council employees and members of the public.

2.19 Within that, staff and the public particularly focused on 'Safe' and 'Clean' as key areas in the vision statement, and 'Financial Stability', 'Safer Nottingham', 'Serving People Well' and 'Keeping Nottingham Working' as their main priorities from the eleven headline outcomes.

2.20 There is a significant amount of detailed feedback provided by both the online survey and engagement sessions, with too much detail to go into here. Officers are reviewing the feedback and have some early proposed recommendations for Executive Board to consider for ways the draft SCP can be modified to take account of some of the feedback received, to ensure we are properly taking account of and reflecting the feedback and concerns of local people, employees and partners.

2.21 Proposed recommendations for Executive Board to consider are:

- Staff raised how the draft SCP would be viewed by our local business community, with suggestions to make the document more relevant and 'business friendly' to local employers and businesses. Officers propose to revise some of the language in the draft to reflect this.
- Councillors and representatives of the city's arts and culture sector felt the importance of arts and culture was underplayed in a previous version of the draft, and officers have already sought to address this by referencing it in the latest version of the draft (see Appendix 1), for example:

- “A diverse, creative, vibrant and multicultural city.”
 - “It is a young, growing and diverse city, where collaboration and new creative voices can be heard.”
 - “Work with our Business Improvement District and Cultural partners to promote the City as a positive visitor destination location.”
 - “Work towards an application to become City of Culture in 2029.”
- Local people raised the importance of volunteering and opportunities to get involved in activity to support the city and their local communities. Officers are proposing to include ‘sign-posting’ information in the document to volunteering opportunities both at the Council (Clean Champions) and the Nottingham Voluntary and Community Service, within the Clean and Connected Communities outcome.

2.22 Officers will present more detailed findings and reflections once the consultation with partners has concluded and the feedback from the IAB on the latest draft is received.

3 Other options considered in making recommendations

3.1 To do nothing: maintaining the existing Council Plan 2019-23 was not considered appropriate in light of the significantly changed operating context for the Council and Nottingham city overall, along with the requirements of the R&IP and MHCLG that the Council must deliver.

4 Finance colleague comments (including implications and value for money/VAT)

4.1 A key focus of the Council, supported by the main themes of the Recovery and Improvement Plan, is the need for a more medium-term financial planning horizon and the achievement of a sustainable, balanced budget in the context of a refreshed policy framework and direction for the Council.

4.2 The key financial goal is to match our ambition with the resources we have in order to deliver, in a transparent, effective and efficient way, an agenda that we can afford – without recourse to our reserves and without taking undue risks or making over-optimistic assumptions.

4.3 Good progress has been made towards achieving this goal, but the wider operating and financial context remains extremely challenging. There is still much more for the Council to do if it is to successfully deliver the scale of improvement required within the timescale set out in the recovery plan.

4.4 Whilst it is a positive step towards the aim of producing a plan that aligns a rolling four-year planning cycle with an affordable and sustainable financial envelope, there are risks that will need managing given both the 2021/22 in-year forecast overspend and the known and reported funding gap for 2022/23 onwards.

4.5 As such, it should not yet be considered to be fully costed or demonstrably representing value for money with the resources currently forecast to be available.

Advice provided by Clive Heaphy, Interim Corporate Director of Finance and Resources, on 9 August 2021.

5 Legal and Procurement colleague comments (including risk management issues, and legal, Crime and Disorder Act and procurement implications)

- 5.1 The current Strategic Council Plan runs concurrently with the electoral term. In May 2019, Council approved the adoption of the Nottingham Labour Manifesto 2019 as a basis of its policies for the current term of office. The Strategic Council Plan adopted in November 2019 reflected this. The draft Strategic Council Plan 2021-23 will replace the Strategic Council Plan 2019-23 for the remainder of the term of office.
- 5.2 The Council has a variety of statutory duties that it must fulfil by law. It cannot lawfully decide not to carry out those duties. Even where the Council is under a statutory duty to provide a service, there is often a discretion available to the Council about the level of service provision. For other activities, the Council provides services in pursuance of a statutory power rather than a duty, and though not bound to carry out those activities, decisions about them must be taken in accordance with the decision making requirements of administrative law.
- 5.3 Members have a duty to ensure that the Council acts lawfully. The Council must set and maintain a balanced budget and must take steps to deal with any projected overspends and identify savings or other measures to bring budget pressures under control.

Advice provided by Beth Brown, Head of Legal and Governance, on 9 August 2021.

6 Strategic Assets & Property colleague comments (for decisions relating to all property assets and associated infrastructure)

- 6.1 Not applicable.

7 Social value considerations

- 7.1 Not applicable.

8 Regard to the NHS Constitution

- 8.1 Not applicable.

9 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

- 9.1 Whilst the draft Plan does propose potential changes to Council policies and services, these have not been finalised and any changes to policies and services will be assessed for their impact in detail, including on equality, diversity and inclusion in the city, as part of the Council's Budget Setting and Medium-Term Financial Planning process due to take place over autumn/winter 2021.

10 List of background papers relied upon in writing this report (not including published documents or confidential or exempt information)

10.1 None.

11 Published documents referred to in this report

11.1 Nottingham City Council Plan 2019-23

11.2 Nottingham City Council Recovery and Improvement Plan 2021-24