

City Council - 13 September 2021

Report of the Leader of the Council

Strategic Council Plan 2021-23

1 Summary

- 1.1 The Strategic Nottingham City Council Plan 2021-23 (The Strategic Council Plan or SCP), sets out the key outcomes, priorities and activities to be delivered by the Council up to March 2023.
- 1.2 The outcomes, priorities and activities in the SCP set out the policy framework that will steer the Council's approach to service planning and the delivery of our ambitions for Nottingham over the next two years.
- 1.3 More detail of the SCP is set out in Appendix 1.
- 1.4 The draft SCP was formally endorsed at Executive Board on 17th August, subject to some further changes to content as a result of an external consultation process that was still underway. The consultation process concluded on 9th Aug and changes resulting from the consultation have been incorporated into the final version of the Strategic Council Plan.
- 1.4 The executive summary of the consultation findings, recommendations and details of these changes is set out in Appendix 2.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 To approve the proposed Strategic Council Plan 2021-23.
- 2.2 To note the new Performance Management Framework (PMF) that will support oversight and accountability for delivery of the outcomes, priorities and activities in the Plan.

3 Reasons for recommendations

- 3.1 As part of the City Council's Recovery and Improvement Plan (R&IP), the Council was required to review its policy framework within the 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 (please see Appendix 1).
- 3.2 The SCP details the vision, high level outcomes and priorities for the City Council over the next two years. It provides a greater focus on the statutory services and activities the Council is required to provide to support local people, places and partners.
- 3.3 It also includes commitments from the existing Council Plan 2019-23 that have been reviewed against the funding and resources available to deliver them, alongside the statutory and transformation activity that supports the new headline outcomes.
- 3.4 In light of the changed and difficult wider context in which the Council is operating due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, and the significant challenges it is facing as an organisation, it is vital that we continue to clearly articulate our priorities for

Nottingham to colleagues, citizens, partners and wider stakeholders, with clear accountability and measures of success to enable the organisation to be held to account by those we serve.

- 3.5 In clearly setting out the Council's plans and priorities over the next 2 years, we ensure that colleagues, citizens, partners and wider stakeholders are provided with an open and transparent demonstration of what the City Council hopes to achieve for local people up to 2023.

4 Other options considered in making recommendations

- 4.1 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 overall, along with the requirements of the R&IP and the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) that the Council must deliver.

5 Background (including outcomes of consultation)

- 5.1 Following the publication of the Public Interest Report (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.
- 5.2 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.
- 5.3 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.
- 5.4 A key aspect of delivering the improvement needed has been the development of a refreshed policy framework for the Council: 'the Strategic Council Plan'.
- 5.5 The SCP reaffirms the organisation's vision and priorities over the next two years, whilst also taking full account of our absolute commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion, and ensuring our priorities and activities are deliverable within a reduced funding envelope.
- 5.6 The SCP meets the requirements of the R&IP and MHCLG 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.

5.7 Alongside the revised Plan, a comprehensive PMF will underpin delivery of the plan, and provide the Corporate Leadership Team, Leadership Group, the public, partners and stakeholders 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. The approach to performance management is set out in more detail below.

Consultation on the Strategic Council Plan

5.8 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 SCP and the priorities and activities that flow from it, and ensure the policy framework we operate within is robust and focused on the right outcomes for the city and local people.

5.9 Consultation took place via 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.

5.10 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.

5.11 Findings from the consultation were reflected in the final version of the plan and led to a number of changes. A summary of consultation feedback and the City Council response is set out in Appendix 2.

Performance Management Framework

5.12 The City Council's approach and focus on performance management is being improved, including the development of a more comprehensive and overarching Performance Management Framework (PMF).

5.13 The revised PMF will help ensure appropriate accountability and oversight of the Council's performance against our high level outcomes, priorities and activities takes place at all levels of the organisation.

5.14 The PMF contains a range of statutory duties and strategic indicators representative of the City Council's activities against which performance will be measured and reported on. Named officers are responsible for reporting of performance against the performance indicators in the PMF.

- 5.15 Directorate Leadership Teams will regularly review relevant performance data each month, allowing any performance issues to be identified in a timely manner and managed appropriately where necessary.
- 5.16 'Performance clinics' will be established to give sufficient rigour and accountability to the performance management process; the 'clinics' will help give confidence that Council performance is subject to robust discussion and review across the range of indicators in the PMF.
- 5.17 A smaller subset of 'critical indicators' will provide the Council's senior leadership with a focussed overview of the key areas of Council performance. Performance against these critical indicators will be reported to the Corporate Leadership Team and the Executive on a quarterly basis, by exception.
- 5.18 Reporting will be captured through the Council's online performance management system. The PMF is a 'live' document which can be revised as needed to ensure it continues to remain relevant and reflects the strategies, priorities and statutory duties of the City Council.

6 Finance colleague comments (including implications and value for money)

- 6.1 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.
- 6.2 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.
- 6.3 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.
- 6.4 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.
- 6.5 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 31 August 2021.

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

- 7.1 The current 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 Council Plan adopted in November 2019

reflected this. The Strategic Council Plan 2021-23 will replace the Council Plan 2019-23 for the remainder of the term of office.

- 7.2 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.
- 7.3 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 31 August 2021.

8 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

- 8.1 An EIA is not required because:

The Strategic Council Plan clearly sets out Nottingham City Council's firm commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) across our policies and services for local people, including recognising where these may have been impacted as a result of the Covid-19 Pandemic. Nottingham City Council is committed to Nottingham being an inclusive city where everyone is treated fairly, with dignity and respect.

Any changes to policies and services proposed in the Strategic Council Plan will be assessed on an individual basis for their impact in detail, including on EDI, as part of the Council's Budget Setting and Medium-Term Financial Planning process due to take place over autumn/winter 2021.

9 List of background papers other than published works or those disclosing confidential or exempt information

- 9.1 None

10 Published documents referred to in compiling this report

- 10.1 Nottingham City Council Plan 2019-23.
- 10.2 Nottingham City Council Recovery and Improvement Plan 2021-24.
- 10.3 Draft Strategic Council Plan 2021-23 - Executive Board 17/08/21.

Councillor David Mellen
Leader of the Council