

# City Council - 4 March 2024

## Report of the Leader of the Council

### Corporate Director/ Director:

Chief Executive

Acting Assistant Chief Exec/Director of Policy, Performance and Communications

### Report Author and Contact Details:

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### Title: Strategic Council Plan - Refresh 2024 - 2027

### Does the report form part of the Budget or Policy Framework?

Yes  No

### Does this report contain any information that is exempt from publication?

No

### Relevant Council Plan Key Outcome:

Green, Clean and Connected Communities

Keeping Nottingham Working

Carbon Neutral by 2028

Safer Nottingham

Child-Friendly Nottingham

Living Well in our Communities

Keeping Nottingham Moving

Improve the City Centre

Better Housing

Serving People Well

## 1. Summary

1.1 The Strategic Council Plan (SCP) aims to inform residents, partners and stakeholders of the Council's priorities until 2027.

1.2 The current Strategic Council Plan has been refreshed in line with the majority group's election pledges following the Local Elections in May 2023, and within the constraints of the 2024/25 Budget and savings contained therein, while noting the additional budget gap of £68m in 2025/26 and £170m over the four year MTFP period.

## 2. Recommendation

2.1 To approve the refreshed Strategic Council Plan 2024 – 2027.

## 3. Reasons for recommendation

3.1 The refreshed plan (Appendix 1) sets out our vision for improving Nottingham whilst keeping residents at the heart of everything the City Council does.

- 3.2 The Strategic Council Plan (SCP) for 2023-27 needs to be revised in line with the majority group's election pledges following the Local Elections in May 2023 and within the constraints of the 2024/25 MTFP. It also needs to be updated to take account of changes to business as usual/statutory delivery given the Council's reduced resources and s.114. Fundamentally, the Council is changing to become a smaller, different organisation. Significant savings are required, and these savings will alter what we can deliver.
- 3.3 To ensure deliverability within the existing resource envelope, the SCP refresh has been aligned with the development processes for the Medium-Term Financial Plan and the Divisional Plans. In this, a similar approach is taken to that around the Capital Programme where spend can only be committed where matching resources are available. Further review and change will be required to account for the budget gaps in 2025/26 and beyond.
- 3.4 On 11 September 2023 Full Council agreed to bring a refreshed Strategic Council Plan to Full Council in February 2024, now rescheduled to March.

#### **4. Other options considered in making recommendations**

- 4.1 None. Improvement and Assurance Board Instructions require the Council to ensure that its policy framework is integrated with the MTFP.

#### **5. Consideration of Risk**

- 5.1 Performance and risk are co-reported to Directorate Leadership Team meetings and to the Corporate Leadership Team. Activities within the plan are subject to individual risk review.

#### **6. Best Value Considerations**

- 6.1 Best Value is a key component of the Strategic Council Plan, and decisions and priorities within it are subject to consideration of Best Value and Social Value. Best Value decisions are taken individually against the activities within the plan.

#### **7. Background (including outcomes of consultation)**

- 7.1 Aligning the SCP with the MTFP via Divisional Plans would represent both good practice and be in line with the statutory instructions from the Improvement and Assurance Board (IAB), specifically:

- Instruction 2.1: Approval of wholly realistic, and balanced, plans and budgets
- Instruction 4.1: Approve the fully integrated SCP, Workforce Plan, MTFP, Transformation and Recovery Plans.
- Instruction 4.2: Instil a truly corporate commitment in the fulfilment of the Council's Plans.
- Instruction 4.3: Provide a clear and direct link between the Corporate Plans and the Performance Management Regime.
- Instruction 6.5: Compile a clear plan and procedure for monitoring performance against plans.

- 7.2 The Government's 'minded to' letter of 13 December 2023 stated that:

*“The Board consider that mismatch between the Authority’s strategic and service plans and the medium-term financial plan must be addressed immediately.”*

- 7.3 This proposed refresh would enable Nottingham City Council to ensure alignment between its policy framework and the 2024/25 MTFP/Budget. It is, however, possible that should Commissioners be implemented by Government, the SCP may need to take account of, or even be superseded by a revised Nottingham City Council Improvement Plan, required of the Council within the first three months of any Commissioner-led intervention.
- 7.4 In due course this plan will be subject to further review and change to reflect the £68m budget gap in 2025/26, rising to £170m over the four year MTFP period (Table 5 of Budget and MTFP refers), which will require additional savings to be found so that our priority actions remain aligned with the resources that we have available.
- 7.5 Additionally, in light of the implementation of a significant package of proposals (subject to agreement) to help deliver a balanced budget, including circa. 550fte reductions, a more fundamental review of the vision and strategic objectives of the Council may be required at a future date to ensure that they are consistent with a smaller, leaner organisation.

## **8. Finance colleague comments (including implications and value for money)**

- 8.1 The approved budget strategy for the 2024/25 - 2027/28 Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) requires the following objectives to be met first before any new investment growth is considered for delivering Strategic Council Plan priorities:
- 1) Set and deliver a balanced budget.
  - 2) Establish financial resilience to ensure council's long term financial health and viability is sound.
  - 3) Maximise the 'One Council' as a vehicle to delivering transformation for the organisation.
  - 4) Address emerging pressures that are unavoidable.
- 8.2 The Council continues to face truly exceptional circumstances as best demonstrated by the resultant budget gap presented to the Executive Board in February 2024 of c£41m for 2024/25 that is predicated on Department of Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) approving the Council’s request for Exceptional Financial Support (EFS) to set a balanced budget next year. The predominate drivers of these exceptional pressures are a combination of both significant demographic, complexity of provision and inflationary pressures across wide range of areas. As such, the proposals developed by officers, using the Duties and Powers framework have been insufficient in meeting the quantum of corresponding growth required to provide adequate financial provision for council's service obligations.
- 8.3 The significance of the budget gap over the MTFP period 2024/25 - 2027/28 of c£172m combined with the need to rely on substantial amounts of EFS should not be underestimated and although the EFS would allow the Council to set a balanced budget in 2024/25 it sets itself a significantly higher hurdle to achieve in 2025/26. Therefore, it is essential that the Strategic Council Plan is aligned to the available resources within the MTFP with key focus on deliverables for 2024/25 fully funded from within approved budget, whilst the Council works in establishing a sustainable financial strategy to set and deliver a balance budget over the MTFP period.

**9. Legal colleague comments**

9.1 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 and the way in which the service is delivered. 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.

9.2 The Council has a duty to act 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. Any strategic plan commitments must be delivered within the financial envelope.

Beth Brown, Head of Legal, 1 February 2024

**10. Other relevant comments**

10.1 Relevant advice has been sought in relation to the individual activities contained within the Strategic Council Plan.

**11. Crime and Disorder Implications (If Applicable)**

11.1 Not applicable.

**12. Social value considerations (If Applicable)**

12.1 Not applicable.

**13. Regard to the NHS Constitution (If Applicable)**

13.1 Not applicable.

**14. Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)**

14.1 Has the equality impact of the proposals in this report been assessed?

No



An EIA is not required because:

The individual activities contained within the Strategic Council Plan are subject to an EIA where applicable.

**15. Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)**

15.1 Has the data protection impact of the proposals in this report been assessed?

No



A DPIA is not required because:

The activity contained within the Strategic Council Plan does not include any data which is not already in the public domain, or is not suitable for publication

**16. Carbon Impact Assessment (CIA)**

16.1 Has the carbon impact of the proposals in this report been assessed?

No



A CIA is not required because:

The individual activities contained within the Strategic Council Plan are reviewed alongside the Council's Carbon Neutral 2028 Action Plan.

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

17.1 None

**18. Published documents referred to in this report**

18.1 [Section 114\(3\) report](#)

18.2 ['Minded to' Letter to the Chief Executive](#)

18.3 [Strategic Council Plan 2023-27](#)

18.4 [Executive Board Budget Report](#)

**Councillor David Mellen**  
**Leader of the Council**