

STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL

THURSDAY, 26 OCTOBER 2023

Report Title	Council Plan 2021-2026 Refresh			
Purpose of Report	To present the progress made against the Council Plan 2021-2026 to date, and to approve the refreshed Council Plan.			
Decision(s)	Council RESOLVES to adopt the refreshed Council Plan 2021-2026.			
Consultation and Feedback	The refreshed Council Plan has been recommended to Full Council by Community Services and Licensing, Environment, Housing and Strategy and Resources Committees. The refreshed Council Plan was produced in consultation with the Alliance Leadership Team, Alliance members, the Strategic Leadership Team, the Leadership and Management Team and Council officers who are lead officers identified in the Council Plan.			
Report Author	Hannah Emery, Policy & Governance Manager. hannah.emery@stroud.gov.uk Sarah Turner, Senior Policy & Governance Officer. sarah.turner@stroud.gov.uk			
Options	That the refreshed Council Plan is not approved. This would lead to issues with the Council Plan not reflecting progress made to date or matters that have arisen since the original plan was agreed.			
Background Papers	Original Council Plan as agreed in October 2021 Performance Management Framework			
Appendices	Appendix A – Council Plan Progress Report Appendix B – Refreshed Council Plan Appendix C – Council Plan Structure			
Implications (further details at the end of the report)	Financial	Legal	Equality	Environmental
	No	Yes	No	No

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Adopted in October 2021, the Council Plan 2021-2026 sets out the overall strategic priorities and objectives of the council. The Plan helps to coordinate all planning, decision making and delivery across the council of the three priorities and associated objectives:

Community Resilience and Wellbeing	Strengthening and supporting our communities so people feel included and connected
Environment and Climate Change	Protecting our environment and leading the district to carbon neutrality in 2023
Economy, Recovery and Regeneration	Supporting a thriving and resilient local economy

- 1.2 The intention of the Council Plan is not to capture everything we do. In addition to the priorities set out in the Plan, the council also undertakes activities and provides services to meet its duties and responsibilities as set out in law. The Plan provides a framework for the decisions we take including how we prioritise and allocate the resources we have available to achieve these priorities.
- 1.3 The Council Plan needs to be flexible in order to allow us to respond as the context in which we operate changes. Therefore, during the period of a five-year Council Plan, adjustments and refinements may need to be made to respond to changed circumstances and emerging opportunities. A review is also part of good governance and transparency, allowing us to monitor progress against our priorities and update our actions in some areas to keep the plan fresh and relevant.
- 1.4 The Council Plan 2021-2026 has therefore been reviewed, refreshed and strengthened to ensure that it reflects the current strategic priorities of the Council. This report enables Council to consider the progress and achievements we have made to date and to approve the further development and refinement of the Plan for the years ahead.
- 1.1 The refreshed Council Plan 2021-2026 has been presented to Community Services and Licensing (21st September), Environment (14th September), Housing (19th September) and Strategy and Resources (5th October) Committees. No amendments or additions to the plan were proposed and all Committees recommended the refreshed Council Plan 2021-2026 to Full Council for approval and adoption.

2. OVERVIEW OF PERFORMANCE AND PROGRESS

- 2.1 To monitor delivery of the plan we have a performance management framework, which enables us to understand what progress is being made, identify challenges and assess resources. Progress against the key actions and performance indicators is reported on the council’s performance management system, Ideagen, and has been reported to committee on a quarterly basis as part of the performance management arrangements.
- 2.2 Since the Plan was adopted in 2021, we have already gone a long way towards delivering our objectives and commitments. The table at Appendix A shows which Key actions have been completed already and what has been achieved. It also sets out progress made to date on the other longer-term projects and highlights some of the challenges faced which has caused delays to progressing other projects.
- 2.3 The table below provides a high-level summary of the overall progress relating to the Council Plan explained in more detail in Appendix A:

Complete Fully complete and/or operational	20
Progressing Started and on track	48
Known delays Some risk/delay or is behind the original schedule	4
Will not be met Reasons are outlined in Appendix A	2

2.4 Key achievements

<p>CW1 Community Resilience</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support is being provided to 11 Community Hubs across the district. • In March 2023, £35,000 COMF funding was paid to 10 Community Hubs across the district
<p>CW2 Affordable Homes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The New Homes Programme has achieved targets in 21/22 and 22/23. This includes delivery of new homes at Ringfield Close, Nailsworth and Broadfield Road, Eastington
<p>CW3 Strengthen local democracy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A parish and town charter has been developed in collaboration with parish and town councils, this has been adopted by 40 parish and town councils. • An annual schedule of events and parish and town council hub has been launched. • 19 Asset of Community Value applications have been received since January 2022
<p>CW4 Leisure and Culture Services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operation of Stratford Park Leisure Centre is being brought in-house. • The Physical Activity Plan has been adopted and we continue to work with We Can Move to increase activity levels across the district. • The Museum in the Park Supporter Scheme has been successfully launched.
<p>EC1 Tackle the Climate and Ecological Emergency</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 2030 Community Engagement Board has up to 20 district-based community representatives. • We've continued to reduce our emissions year-on-year with 2022 emissions being less than 50% of 2015 emissions. • The Ethical Investment Policy was developed and approved in February 2022.
<p>EC3 Sustainable Construction and Retrofit</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First masterplans for Beeches Green have been received, land at Bath Place, Cheapside has been purchased. • Warm and Well and Innovate to Renovate partnerships continue to progress and deliver domestic retrofit.
<p>EC6 Renewable energy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Installation of water source heat pumps was completed at Ebley Mill and Brimscombe Port Mills in January 2022. • We are supporting a partnership to scope for community energy projects with Transition Stroud and Big Solar Co-op.
<p>ER1 Economic recovery</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Economic Development Strategy was approved in March 2022 and work is continuing to implement the Economic Development Action Plan. • A provider has been appointed to deliver digital and online support and training for high street businesses across the district.
<p>ER2 Regeneration</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • St Mowden Homes have been selected as the development partner for Brimscombe Port; various public consultations have been held. • The Ocean Bridge project was completed on time and within budget. • 6 priority projects were agreed with the Regeneration and Investment Board which focus whole or in part on brownfield regeneration sites.
<p>ER3 Investment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Place Prospectus was launched in April 2023 and the Ambassador's Programme and newsletter are now being developed. • The Canal Strategy was approved in October 2022, the draft action plan is in development. • The Council submitted a Levelling Up Fund bid of £16m but was unsuccessful, all delivery partners are committed to pursuing alternative means of delivery for the projects identified as part of the bid.
<p>ER4 Support for businesses</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10k funding has been provided to Stroud Valleys Credit Union to allow them to keep physical facilities available in Stroud. • A Community Wealth Building Report was agreed by S&R Committee in July 2023.

3. REFRESH OF THE COUNCIL PLAN

3.1 Review and Consultation

3.2 An initial review of the Council Plan was undertaken to assess progress against actions and review actions where progress was not on track. All Lead Officers were invited to identify those actions where they recommended adjustments be made to refocus or strengthen the action.

3.3 This was followed by an All-Alliance Workshop in July where members assessed progress against each action and recommendations made by Lead Officers. In particular, consideration was given to alterations to actions which may result in more effective performance management.

3.4 As part of this review, Sub Actions, Milestones and Performance Indicators have been carefully examined and re-developed to allow for more effective reporting of progress and additional performance indicators have been established to best demonstrate progress in tracking and achieving our objectives.

3.5 Summary of Key changes to the Council Plan

3.6 The updated and refreshed Council Plan can be found at Appendix B.

3.7 Communities, economy and environment continue to be the priorities at the heart of the Plan and there have been no changes proposed to 16 objectives underpinning these priorities.

3.8 The Council Plan has been updated to reflect key developments over the last year and alterations and adjustments to the Plan have been categorised as follows:

Completed Actions: In recognition that there is still more to do, many of the actions that have been completed have been replaced with new actions to reflect the ongoing development of the work. Other actions which have been completed and are fully operational have been closed and replaced with a performance indicator.

End dates: All actions now have a definitive end date in the format of dd/mm/yyyy to provide more clarity in the refreshed plan and to enable effective performance monitoring.

In addition, some key actions now have extended end dates, including taking the deadline to the end of current plan. In many cases, this is not a reflection on progress but in recognition that the work in this area will be ongoing and to ensure we continue to report activity and measure performance in this area.

In cases where the deadline has been extended to allow for longer time to progress the action, the original end date will not be overwritten and will continue to be reported in the Council's performance management system.

Significant alterations: A small number of actions have been significantly redeveloped. These significant changes have primarily been to refocus or strengthen the action to ensure the action properly reflects the work to be undertaken and enable more effective performance monitoring. In some cases, significant alterations have been made due to being unable to progress work set out in the original action and comments have been provided in Appendix A to explain the reasons behind the lack of progress. Other significant alterations have been made to the sub actions and milestones and are explained below.

Sub Actions and Milestones: Sub Actions and Milestones have seen the most major changes and many additional milestones have been developed. Reasons for this are mostly due to the fact that the projects have progressed substantially since the original plan was adopted in 2021 and no longer reflect the current status of the work being undertaken, which has made it difficult to meaningfully report against these milestones.

As outlined in Section 3.14, it is proposed that flexibility is given to allow for regular adjustments to Milestones and Sub Actions which will be reported through the quarterly performance monitoring reports.

Performance Indicators In addition to identifying appropriate Sub Actions and Milestones, considerable work has been done to develop our suite of Performance Indicators (PI's) under each objective. Appendix B sets out all the proposed PI's and their identified targets where appropriate. Further information on the reporting of Performance Indicators can be found in Section 3.10.

New themes and actions: International conflict, especially the war in Ukraine, has caused instability, leading to inflation and cost of living pressures, as well as a need for a humanitarian response to the needs of those displaced by conflict.

It is therefore recommended that the Plan is updated under Objective CW2 to include these key developments and reflect the work the council is doing to lead a local response. Inclusion of this work in the Plan will ensure reporting of progress and performance monitoring of these areas of work.

The new over-arching action for International Migration is recommended as:

- Co-ordinate accommodation and support services for migrants arriving in the district and link to other statutory and voluntary services to support the health and wellbeing of migrant households.

We are continuing to work with partners to find opportunities to support residents through the significant cost of living pressures and there are a number of actions within the Plan that contribute to the council's response to the crisis. Some adjustments have been made to actions to focus on the response and significant amendments have been made to action CW1.5 to ensure the Plan includes a primary action focussing on the council's response to the cost of living crisis:

- Work with strategic and operational partners to improve food resilience, access and equity including support for those affected by the cost of living.

The Social Housing (Regulations) Bill will update consumer standards to place emphasis on safety and compliance, tenant engagement, data and evidence, and governance and accountability. To ensure we are able to meet these new standards and report against them within the Council Plan, it is recommended that a new action is added under Objective CW2:

- Ensure our council homes meet legislative and regulatory compliance standards.

3.9 Performance Management of the Council Plan

3.10 The Council Plan has been built on the council's new performance management system, Ideagen (previously Pentana).

- 3.11 The Council Plan Portal on Ideagen details all actions, sub-actions, milestones and performance indicators included in the Council Plan. Committee Portals have also been created to enable straightforward access to view progress for actions relevant to particular committees.
- 3.12 All Members have access to the system and following an introductory session, Members are able to view progress and download reports at any time.
- 3.13 As actions progress during the term of the Council Plan it may be necessary to amend the milestones or performance indicators to better reflect the current position at that time. Any amendments to milestones or performance indicators will be reported to the relevant committee through the quarterly performance monitoring reports.
- 3.14 Relevant performance indicators against key actions and sub-actions have been identified in Appendix B. It should be noted that not all of the performance indicators are able to be reported immediately, some indicators will only be able to be reported when certain milestones have been completed or in some cases, when the key action is complete. Frequency of reporting for some performance indicators is still to be determined and is dependent on progress of the action.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 Communities, environment and economy continue to be the key themes at the heart of our Council Plan and our priorities and objectives remain unchanged. As a result of the progress made and adaptations required, the key actions, sub actions and milestones have been the main area of change.
- 4.2 The Council Plan review and refresh has provided an opportunity to take stock of the good progress made in the past two years. The review has highlighted the need for the Council Plan to be flexible to allow us to respond as the context in which we operate changes and therefore make revisions to reflect progress and required amendments on an annual basis.
- 4.3 Upon approval of the refreshed Council Plan, a fully designed version will be produced to replace the Council Plan published in 2021.

5. IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications from the adoption of the refreshed Council Plan.

Items within the Council Plan will need to be considered within the Medium Term Financial Plan to ensure the required allocation of resources.

Lucy Clothier, Accountancy Manager

Tel: 01453 754343 Email: lucy.clothier@stroud.gov.uk

5.2 Legal Implications

The Council Plan sets out the priorities and objectives of the Council and will help guide future strategic and resourcing decisions made by the Council.

Legal advice will need to be obtained when making and implementing any such decisions, as appropriate.

Shahzia Daya, Director: One Legal

Tel: 01684 272250 Email: legalservices@onelegal.org.uk

5.3 Equality Implications

Equality impact assessments are or will be in place for each of the areas of work to deliver the Council Plan priorities.

5.4 Environmental Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.