

Report to Cabinet

28 September 2023

By the Leader of the Council

DECISION REQUIRED



Not exempt

The Council Plan 2023-2027, the Annual Plan 2023-2024 and their resourcing

Executive Summary

Each Council sets a key policy plan near the beginning of its term of office outlining its priorities for the next 4 years. My Cabinet and I spent our first few months of the Council term working with colleagues to ensure this plan meets our political ambitions, the law and our communities' needs. This report introduces this new Council Plan that sits at the top of the Council's policy framework until 2027. Alongside this short policy document this report introduces the first Annual Plan of the Council term. The Annual Plan includes the projects and workstreams my Cabinet asks officers to focus on in our first year. Cabinet will develop an Annual Plan for 2024/25 alongside our budget. We will approve the 2024/25 Annual Plan and any amendments to the Council Plan in January 2024 and take these documents to Council in February 2024. In January we will review the performance indicators to ensure they match the needs of the Council and Annual Plans. This report recommends Cabinet approve the Council and 2023-24 Annual Plans and refers them to Council for adoption.

There are two service areas, property and project management, where the Chief Executive says the current staffing requirement is holding up progress on existing projects and will delay the start of new projects in the Annual Plan. Management has identified two new posts to help resolve the problem. This report recommends Cabinet asks Council to fund these posts.

Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to:

- i) approve the Council Plan 2023-2027 and the Annual Plan 2023-24 and refer them to Council for adoption.
- ii) ask Council to add the £48,010 expenditure for the two new posts outlined in section 3 to the budget for 2023/24.

Reasons for Recommendations

- i) The Council must have a policy framework on which to base its decisions. The Council Plan and Annual Plan are the core documents of this framework.

- ii) The Council needs enough staff in project management and property to progress the current year's capital programme and new projects in the Annual Plan.

Background Papers

Equalities Impact Assessment of the Council Plan and Annual Plan.

Wards affected: all

Contact: Martin Boffey, Leader of the Council

Background Information

1 Introduction and Background

- 1.1 Council approved the last core document for the Council policy framework, the 2019-2023 Corporate Plan at their meeting on 16 October 2019.
- 1.2 The corporate plan, now called the Council Plan, sets the direction for the Council for its current term of office. The 2023-24 Annual Plan is an operational plan to support the Council Plan. It tells people about the work officers will carry out to meet the aims of the Council Plan between now and the end of the financial year.
- 1.3 Senior officers reviewed the work needed to deliver the 2023-24 Annual Plan. The Chief Executive expressed reservations about the organisation's ability to deliver the volume of project work. The Chief Executive told me that the current year's capital programme is behind schedule, as it has been in previous years. She said that extra project work needing project management or property resources would move slowly because the Council has a small property team and only one project manager. Therefore, this report requests funding for additional staffing to aid delivery of these crucial areas of work.
- 1.4 The performance indicators underlying in the 2023/24 Annual Plan, and reported to Overview and Scrutiny Committee earlier this week (appendix A of item 6), are those set by the previous administration. The Annual Plan does not change these because my Cabinet need more time to fully understand the complex operational parts of their work and to ensure we have a full year's performance data to compare to earlier years and other councils. The 2024/25 Annual Plan will review the performance indicators.
- 1.5 The Cabinet and officers have already started work on the 2024-2025 Annual Plan together with the 2024-25 Annual Budget.

2 Relevant Council policy

- 2.1 Once adopted the Council Plan becomes the Council's core policy for its current term. The Annual Plan, Annual Budget, Medium Term Financial Strategy and all other strategies and projects support this Plan. The extra members of staff in property and projects will give these teams a better chance to deliver the projects in the Annual Plan, in particular the property projects and help with the repeated delays in the 2023/24 Capital Programme.

3 Details

- 3.1 The Council Plan, shown at appendix 1, contains four main themes:
 - Supporting people and communities.
 - Inspiring greener futures.
 - Building a thriving economy.
 - Always listening, learning and improving.
- 3.2 Under each theme there are key areas of work the Council wishes to focus on during the next four years. These areas of work continue into the Annual Plan,

shown at appendix 2, that contains details of the work the Cabinet will ask officers to complete between now and 31 March 2024. The Annual Plan includes the performance indicators used to measure the performance of the Council's main operational services.

3.3 To deliver the new Annual Plan, in addition to the existing projects underway under the Corporate Plan 2019-23 and the Capital Programme for 2023-24, the Chief Executive and her management team recommend the creation of two new posts:

- A Graduate Trainee Surveyor post to provide professional support to the experienced surveyors on property, asset, and estate management matters, including property management, licenses and wayleaves, project support, drafting site plans, rent reviews and valuations, landlord and tenant issues, leasing and letting, evaluation and analytics.
- A Project Manager role to ensure the delivery of key projects in the Annual Plan and to help with projects in the existing Capital Programme.

3.4 Officers are already working with Cabinet members to develop a new Annual Plan, the 2024-25 Annual Plan, alongside the budget preparations for 2024-25

4 Next Steps

4.1 Once Cabinet has approved the recommendations contained in this report it will refer the report to Council for adoption and approval of the extra budget.

4.2 Once Council had adopted these two documents, subject to any changes made during the Council meeting, we will publish them on the Council's website. Officers will begin to implement the work outlined in the Annual Plan with the intention of completing this by the end of our financial year. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will review progress against the Annual Plan projects and alongside the current performance indicators every quarter. My Cabinet, the Cabinet members and officers will take each action between now and May 2024 based on the policies laid out in the Council Plan.

4.3 The Director of Place will recruit to the two new posts. Officers should start in these roles later this autumn.

4.4 In January 2024, my Cabinet will review and update the Council Plan and present the Annual Plan for the financial year 2024-25 alongside its budget. The Council's managers will work with Cabinet on a more detailed analysis of the officers needed to fulfil the whole Council Plan as part of this process.

5 Views of the Policy Development Advisory Group and Outcome of Consultations

5.1 These plans involve converting our election manifesto commitments into a policy framework for the next 3½ years. Therefore, they were not considered at the Policy Development Advisory Groups.

- 5.2 The Monitoring Officer and the Director of Resources reviewed this report and the Plans to ensure legal and financial probity. The Chief Executive, Director of Place and Director of Communities, as well as Heads of Service, worked with the Cabinet members during the development of these plans. The Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development oversaw the design of the two new posts.

6 Other Courses of Action Considered but Rejected

- 6.1 The Council has to have a key policy document to replace the Corporate Plan 2019/2023. Decision making by the Council cannot operate without such a document and the Cabinet discounted having no plan at all. I did consider the format and name of the plans with my Cabinet members but prefer the modern approach of an overarching Council Plan and annual detailed plans of projects and performance indicators, allowing us to make changes with circumstances during the Council's four-year term of office. I considered changing the performance indicators in year, but decided against this to give my Cabinet leads longer to get to grips with the operational parts of their portfolios and to ensure we have a full year's data for comparison to previous years and other Councils.
- 6.2 I considered not recommending budget to recruit extra officers in Project Management and Property. However, as project work, especially capital project work has fallen behind for several years now, the Chief Executive advised a slow delivery of projects would result from keeping the resource as is. The Director of Place considered seeking a qualified surveyor rather than a trainee. She decided against this approach because, as with all Council professions, our salary level combined with a national shortage means recruiting a qualified surveyor would be unlikely to succeed.

7 Resource Consequences

- 7.1 The Council Plan and Annual Plan add to the existing pressure on staffing in Property and Projects and led to officers recommending the two new posts. The budget for the trainee Property Surveyor is £18,440 in 2023/24. The full year cost in 2024/25, is £36,880. The cost of the Corporate Project Manager is £29,570 in 2023/24. The full year cost is £59,140. Neither of these costings include the 2023/24 pay award, which is not yet agreed.
- 7.2 Most of the projects in the Annual Plan will be met from existing budgets in 2023/24 but the outcomes of some of the early work may lead to further costs in future years. Cabinet will bring these, and any compensating savings, to Council as part of the budget in February.
- 7.2 The Director of Resources advises that the additional salaries of £48,010 in 2023/24 adds further pressure to the delivery of a balanced budget, but aids delivery of key projects. He advised it is desirable for the officers to focus on projects which contribute most towards a revenue return to help offset this cost.

8 Legal Considerations and Implications

- 8.1 Only Council can set the Policy Framework and only Council can agree changes to budgets. Therefore, the Council Plan, the Annual Plan and the two new posts require Council approval.

9 Risk Assessment

- 9.1 There are no significant risks in setting a Council Plan and Annual Plan because the Council has to have a strategic framework on which to make its decisions. There is a risk of increased costs in implementing these plans. This is a normal risk carried by any Council that wishes to make life better for its communities and businesses.
- 9.2 There is a high risk in reaching a decision on the two posts in October that it will be too late in the year to resolve the existing backlogs in project work, especially capital work, or to deliver much of the Council Plan in 2023/24.

10 Procurement implications

- 10.1 There are no direct procurement implications arising from agreeing the Council and Annual Plan.

11. Equalities and Human Rights implications / Public Sector Equality Duty

- 11.1 The Equalities Impact Assessment on the Council Plan and Annual Plan found they have no negative impact on people with protected characteristics. The Annual Plan includes projects that will help people with disabilities, older people, younger people, males, females and asylum seekers from other countries. A video of this plan will help people with visual impairments and learning disabilities access it more easily. As some projects in the plan progress, such as the Low-Income Family Tracker, the project on increase access to sport by under-represented groups and the Health and Wellbeing work, that our understanding of disadvantaged groups will grow too. Officers will review the Equalities Impact Assessment each year as we develop the new Annual Plan using our increased knowledge.

12 Environmental Implications

- 12.1 The Council Plan and Annual Plan contain projects with significant benefits for the environment. A theme "Inspiring Greener Futures" and the projects supporting this in the Annual Plan will improve the environment in our District.

13 Other Considerations

- 13.1 The Council Plan includes aims to create safe spaces for children, safe roads, and tackling anti-social behaviour all of which will help make our towns, villages and countryside safer places for all people.

A fresh vision for Horsham District

Supporting people and communities	Inspiring greener futures	Building a thriving local economy	Always listening, learning and improving
<p>Our District is a great place to live and everyone deserves to benefit. We'll provide help in tough times and build communities where people can flourish and have fun.</p>	<p>We aim to be a net zero Council by 2030 and a net zero district by 2050. Horsham District will be held in high regard for best practice in rewilding, regenerative farming and recycling.</p>	<p>Our District will be known as an easy place to do business. We'll work to overcome challenges and keep our high streets thriving, both in Horsham town and across the district.</p>	<p>We're stronger when we work together. That means more sharing and more community involvement. Local democracy has to mean more than just an election every four years.</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Help people through the cost of living crisis. 2. Better understand the needs of our whole community to deliver services that support people to live long, active lives. 3. Improve access to affordable housing and community services. 4. Build closer ties with all our housing partners. 5. Improve vulnerable residents' access to benefits. 6. Work with partners to ensure our District continues to be a safe place to live and work. 7. Create safe spaces for our children to grow and play. 8. Invest in local arts and leisure and foster civic pride. 9. Improve access to sports for under-represented groups. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Deliver a Local Plan which sets higher environmental standards including net zero building, green gaps and addressing water neutrality. 2. Show the way to net zero through engagement with our community and our emerging Climate Action Strategy. 3. Create nature diverse places for people to live in. 4. Investigate the benefits and opportunities of Biodiversity Net Gain and carbon credits for HDC and landowners in the district. 5. Help businesses and residents to waste less and recycle more. 6. Create safer routes for cycling and walking. 7. Help residents and businesses to cut carbon emissions and water usage. 8. Assist residents and businesses with the insulation of homes and premises. 9. Support residents and businesses in switching to green technologies. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fast-track new businesses with start-up packages and pop-up shops. 2. Support flexible workers with hot-desking and meeting facilities. 3. Help deliver Horsham's first Business Improvement District. 4. Pursue public realm improvements in our towns and villages. 5. Promote business and culture with new events. 6. Improve digital access in rural areas. 7. Campaign for improvements in public transport. 8. Promote Horsham District as a destination for food and drink tourism. 9. Support initiatives to help people find work. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Actively listen to and communicate with residents, businesses and volunteer groups. 2. Engage and involve parishes and neighbourhood councils more. 3. Improve our understanding and response to inclusion and equality issues. 4. Review the Council Constitution to ensure it is fit for purpose, allows for proper scrutiny, and facilitates public engagement. 5. Ensure a District-wide balance of focus between rural and urban communities. 6. Support residents in getting a locally responsive service from the County Council's Highways service on traffic and parking issues. 7. Look for opportunities to generate income and reduce costs in order to support our services. 8. Review existing strategies and policies and address any gaps identified.

Annual Plan 2023 - 2024

Supporting people and communities

1. Help people through the cost of living crisis

- Extend funding to the Citizens' Advice Bureau to enable them to help residents access unclaimed benefits.
- Hold a cost of living Summit to identify further ways in which we can work with partners to support residents who are struggling financially.
- Continue to financially support Horsham Matters with the foodbank.
- Operate a cost of living grant to facilitate the provision of warm spaces and other direct cost of living support to residents.

2. Better understand the needs of our whole community to deliver services that support people to live long, active lives

- Open the new Health and Wellbeing Hub and extend its reach to all in our communities.
- Investigate the demography of the District to allow us to enable improved health outcomes.
- Initiate conversations with partners to better understand the needs of older residents in Horsham District.
- Issue £1.3m Disabled Facilities and Home Repair Assistance grants to help people live in their own homes.

3. Improve access to affordable housing and community services

- Deliver new affordable housing units on Council land at Duke's Square and London Road through Horsham District Homes.
- Work with Registered Provider partners to identify and secure alternative temporary accommodation, reducing reliance on bed and breakfast.
- Seek out and use grant funding from Government and the County Council to provide more accommodation for homeless people.
- Enable residents to access private sector housing through the provision of affordable housing deposits.

- Match fund and deliver housing for refugees using the Local Authority Housing Fund.

4. Build closer ties with all our housing partners

- Explore options with Saxon Weald to increase provision of larger properties in the District.

5. Improve vulnerable residents' access to benefits

- Implement Low Income Family Tracker (LIFT) system to enable residents to access over £0.5million of unclaimed benefits in Horsham District.

6. Work with partners to ensure our District continues to be a safe place to live and work

- Improve the ability to report crimes, such as anti-social behaviour and shoplifting through the roll-out of the DISC system.

7. Create safe spaces for our children to grow and play

- Provide new children's play facilities at Roffey Recreation Ground, North Horsham and Holbrook East

8. Invest in local arts and leisure and foster civic pride

- Approve a five-year plan for Horsham Museum ensuring better engagement with the community about the District's heritage.
- Deliver improvements to the Horsham Riverside Walk-in collaboration with local stakeholders.
- Agree the investment plan to ensure the decarbonisation and refurbishment of the Capitol Theatre.

9. Improve access to sports for under-represented groups

- Explore ways to overcome financial barriers to participation in sport.

Inspiring greener futures

1. Deliver a Local Plan which sets higher environmental standards including net zero building, green gaps and addressing water neutrality

- Set ambitious environmental standards/requirements through the Local Plan.

2. Show the way to Net Zero through engagement with our community and our emerging Climate Action Strategy

- Adopt the District-wide Climate Action Strategy to enable the Horsham District to become net zero by 2050.
- Deliver an improved climate change training programme for staff.
- Continue to implement the Council's internal carbon reduction programme.
- Switch over Horsham town centre cleansing vehicles from diesel to electric.
- Continue with the programme of fleet replacement by buying four electric vans to replace diesel vehicles in the Recycling and Waste Service.
- Order new litter and cleansing vehicles to serve sites across the District for fly tip removal and delivery of bins.
- Replace traditional lighting with LEDs in Council owned properties.

3. Create nature diverse places for people to live in

- Establish pollinator corridors across the District, for wildlife to thrive, in conjunction with 'No Mow May'.
- Further develop the Parish and Neighbourhood Climate Action Network.
- Develop an Animal Welfare Policy by March 2024.

4. Investigate the benefits and opportunities of Biodiversity Net Gain and carbon credits for HDC and landowners in the District

- Support the development of local nature recovery network strategies.
- Consider the next steps for the Wilder Horsham District initiative.

5. Help businesses and residents to waste less and recycle more

- Research the financial and environmental costs and benefits of doorstep food waste collection.
- Review District-wide provision of dog bins and consider if it's adequate.

6. Create safer routes for cycling and walking

- Agree Council policy for all new strategic development sites to be designed as 15-minute walkable neighbourhoods.

- Promote, require and make provision for active travel infrastructure within the Local Plan.
- Develop plans to improve non-motorised access for people in the Bishopric and Carfax.

7. Help residents and businesses to cut carbon emissions and water usage

- Develop a Sustainable Business Network to help businesses reduce their carbon footprint.
- Use the One Planet Tool to increase community collaboration for action on climate change.
- Assess options to provide grants to Registered Providers to improve environmental efficiencies of family homes that would otherwise be lost from the affordable housing sector.

8. Assist residents and businesses with the insulation of homes and premises

- Start the groundwork for rolling out a residential retrofit programme to reduce energy and water consumption.

9. Support residents and businesses in switching to green technologies

- Support County Council initiatives to roll out EV charge points throughout the District.

Building a thriving local economy

1. Fast track new businesses with start-up packages and pop-up shops

- Seek opportunities to use Council-owned buildings for incubator and move on units.
- Use the Rural England Prosperity Fund to support rural businesses and community groups with development grants.

2. Support flexible workers with hot-desking and meeting facilities

- Identify buildings in the rural area and in Horsham town centre for co-working venues and use money from the Shared Prosperity Fund to contribute to the capital cost of setting the facilities up.

3. Help deliver Horsham's first Business Improvement District

- Hold the referendum for the new Business Improvement District.

4. Pursue public realm improvements in our towns and villages

- Consult on wide ranging public realm improvements in Horsham town centre
- Implement public realm improvements in Queen Street, Horsham

5. Promote business and culture with new events

- Secure resourcing for events programme to continue beyond 23/24

6. Improve digital access in rural areas

- Continue to lead the West Sussex wide rural connectivity project board including:
 - o Working with the Government on Project Gigabit
 - o Overseeing the use of West Sussex top up vouchers
 - o Reviewing the opportunities for 4G & 5G mobile broadband.

7. Campaign for improvements in public transport

- There are no projects that we will complete under this heading in 2023/24

8. Promote Horsham District as a destination for food and drink tourism

- Develop the Plate Up Local project to get more local food and drink onto local menus and in retailers, including publicity campaigns and networking events.

9. Support initiatives to help people find work

- Hold a job and skills fair to find opportunities for upskilling and employment.

Always listening, learning and improving

1. Actively listen to and communicate with residents, businesses and volunteer groups

- Establish a People's Budget for 2024/25.
- Review the situation for residents who are unable to access services digitally.

2. Engage and involve parishes and neighbourhood councils more

- Introduce a regular newsletter to parish and neighbourhood councils.

- Increase engagement with Horsham District Association of Local Councils.
- Work with Parish Councils, Traders' Associations and Community Partnerships to support our High Streets and build business resilience.

3. Improve our understanding and response to inclusion and equality issues

- Upgrade our equality impact assessment process and training with specific emphasis on neurodiversity.

4. Review the Council Constitution to ensure it is fit for purpose, allows for proper scrutiny, and facilitates public

- Commission a Governance Peer Challenge from the LGA and write an action plan based on its findings.

5. Ensure a District-wide balance of focus between rural and urban communities

- Prepare to take April 2024 Council to a venue in the South of the District to broaden public engagement and commemorate the 50th Anniversary of Horsham District.

6. Support residents in getting a locally responsive service from the County Council's Highways service on traffic and parking issues

- Inform and promote the opportunity for communities to apply for lower speed limits in their neighbourhoods.

7. Look for opportunities to generate income and reduce costs in order to support our services

- Annual review of fees and charges.
- Review temporary accommodation management to ensure the Council achieves value for money from its properties.

8. Review existing strategies and policies and address any gaps identified

- Develop a new Council economic strategy for the next five years.
- Review and update the Council's Green Spaces Strategy.