

Report to Cabinet

25 January 2024

By the Leader of the Council

DECISION REQUIRED



Not exempt.

Annual Plan 2024/25

Executive Summary

This report introduces the Annual Plan for 2024/25. This sits under the Council Plan 2023-2027 and outlines the projects and workstreams that the Council aims to achieve within the financial year 2024/25.

Throughout the year we will review the performance indicators to ensure they match the needs of the Annual Plan. This report recommends that Cabinet approve the Annual Plan for 2024/25 and refers it to full Council for adoption.

Recommendation

Cabinet is recommended to:

- i) approve the Annual Plan for 2024/25 financial year and refer it to Council for adoption.

Reasons for Recommendation

- i) The Annual Plan is an operational plan which identifies projects to be undertaken during a financial year and which gives effect to the themes contained in the Council Plan 2023-2027 which constitutes the Council's Policy Framework.

Background Papers

Cabinet 28 Sept 2023 - Council Plan 2023-2027, the Annual Plan 2023/24 and their resourcing 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 The Annual Plan 2024/25 is an operational plan which sits under, and gives effect to, the themes contained in the Council Plan 2023-2027. 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 2024/25.
- 1.2 In creating the Annual Plan 2024/25, the previous Annual Plan was reviewed by the Cabinet and senior officers at the council.
- 1.3 The performance of the Annual Plan 2024/25 will be monitored along with the Key Performance Indicators (KPI's), listed in appendix 2, and will be reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee quarterly.

2 Relevant Council policy

- 2.1 The Council Plan 2023-2027 is 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.

3 Details

- 3.1 The Annual Plan 2024/25, shown at appendix 1 lists all the key projects that the Council will focus on during 2024/25. These projects are categorised under the objectives of the four main themes of the Council Plan 2023-2027.
- 3.2 The four themes are:
 - Supporting people and communities.
 - Inspiring greener futures.
 - Building a thriving economy.
 - Always listening, learning and improving.
- 3.3 Under each of these themes there are subheadings, each containing lists of key areas of work the Council wishes to focus on.
- 3.4 The Annual Plan includes the performance indicators used to measure the performance of the Council's main operational services.

4 Next Steps

- 4.1 Once Cabinet has approved the Annual Plan 2024/25, it will refer the same to Council for adoption.
- 4.2 Once the Annual Plan has been adopted, it will be published on the Council's website. From 1 April 2024 officers will begin to implement the work outlined in the Annual Plan with the intention of completing this by the end of the financial year 2024/25. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee will review progress against the Annual Plan projects alongside the current performance indicators every quarter. The Cabinet members and officers will take each action between now and March 2025 based on the work laid out in the Annual Plan.

- 4.3 In January 2025, Cabinet will review and update the Council Plan and present the Annual Plan for the financial year 2025/26 alongside its budget.

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

- 5.1 The Finance and Resources Policy Development Advisory Group considered this proposal on 15 January 2024 and were supportive of the projects included in this Annual Plan.
- 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.

6 Other Courses of Action Considered but Rejected

- 6.1 The Council must adopt the Annual Plan 2024/25 to replace the Annual Plan 2023/24 to ensure its operational plans are up to date and, therefore, the option of not producing one was discounted.

7 Resource Consequences

- 7.1 The expenditure and resourcing of the projects will be met from the 2024/25 budget which will be approved by Council in February 2024.

8 Legal Considerations and Implications

- 8.1 The Council requires an up-to-date Annual Plan and there are no legal implications arising from approving the same.

9 Risk Assessment

- 9.1 There are no significant risks in setting and implementing the Annual Plan 2024/25 as it is prudent for the Council to have an operational Annual Plan which is measurable, and which gives effect to the themes contained in the Council's overarching Council Plan 2023-2027. There is a risk of increased costs associated with implementing the projects contained within the Annual Plan 2024/25. This is a normal risk carried by any Council that wishes to make life better for its communities and businesses. There is a risk of non-delivery, which will be mitigated through monitoring.

10 Procurement implications

- 10.1 There are no direct procurement implications arising from agreeing the Annual Plan 2024/25.

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

- 11.1 The Equalities Impact Assessment on the Annual Plan 2024/25 found they have no negative impact on people with protected characteristics. The Annual Plan 2024/25 includes projects that will help people with disabilities, people of all ages and people of all genders. 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, our understanding of disadvantaged groups will grow too. Officers will continue to review the Equalities Impact Assessment each year as we develop new Annual Plans using our increased knowledge.
- 11.2 In addition, Equalities Impact Assessments will be undertaken each time an Annual Plan 2024/25 project comes forward.

12 Environmental Implications

- 12.1 The Annual Plan 2024/25 contains projects with significant benefits for the environment. The “Inspiring Greener Futures” heading contains a wide variety of projects aimed at improving the environment in the district.

13 Other Considerations

- 13.1 None

Supporting people and communities

1. Help people through the cost of living crisis

- Hold a series of community events to understand what community initiatives could be delivered to improve people's quality of life.
- Continue to support working age and pension age claimants on Council Tax Support with up to £195 off their Council Tax bill.

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

- Investigate the demography of the District using health datasets, allowing us to provide improved health outcomes by shaping our wellbeing offer to the needs of our community.
- 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.
- Strengthen the understanding of our communities and workforce through collecting robust equality data and utilising it to inform future decision making.
- Maximise the Health and Wellbeing offer by working in collaboration with Community Services and Sports Development.
- Undertake a review of the Community Services function to ensure it continues to make Horsham District a place where people can flourish and have fun for the long term.
- Develop and launch a People's Budget: a designated fund which residents can decide to use for the priorities that matter to them.

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.

- Explore and investigate providing additional housing to meet local need through a small development of energy efficient, sustainable modular homes for homeless households moving on to permanent accommodation.

- Explore the options to bring more long-term empty properties back into use.

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

- Expand the Low Income Family Tracker (LIFT) system to further enable residents to access over £0.5million of unclaimed benefits in Horsham District.
- Drive forward LIFT projects, including preparing households for Universal Credit migration, in partnership with Citizens Advice, and explore employment support for those with low barriers to work.

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

- Develop and scope the feasibility of introducing a mobile air quality monitoring station.
- Improve the ability to report crimes, such as anti-social behaviour and shoplifting through the roll-out of the DISC system.
- Establish a 'Neighbourhood Networks' pilot scheme to create a network of social interaction and culture of residents talking to / helping each other.

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

- Provide new children's play facilities at Bartholomew Way, Holbrook East.
- Deliver major improvements to the play facilities at Ostlers View, Billingshurst and Carpenters Meadow, Pulborough

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

- Achieve the preparation milestones in the project to decarbonise and refurbish of the Capitol Theatre.
- Complete a scoping exercise to shape the development of a cultural strategy for the Horsham District.
- Create a Denne Road Cemetery Heritage Trail and online tour.
- Invest in improvements to the Southwater Country Park Toilet Block.

9. Improve access to sports for under-represented groups

- Undertake a review of the Leisure Access Card Scheme to ensure it continues to support access to leisure services for the whole community.
- Install an outdoor gym at Bennetts Field, Horsham

Inspiring greener futures

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

- Develop an offsetting scheme for water neutrality to enable development to start coming forward.

2. Show the way to Net Zero through the actions the Council is taking to reduce its emissions, engaging with our community and our Climate Action Strategy

- Continue to implement the Council's internal carbon reduction programme.
- Ensure all vehicles purchased for the Council fleet emit very low carbon or are electric.
- Improve the information and advice for residents and businesses on climate change actions and expand the communication channels that are used.
- Expand and embed the Parish and Neighbourhood Climate Action Network.
- Decarbonise and retrofit three Horsham District Council owned homes, as well as decarbonising one block of flats.
- Investigate options to decarbonise Park House, Horsham.
- Replace the lighting in Horsham Park and Council owned properties with energy efficient lighting.
- Investigate options to decarbonise and improve the energy efficiency of the Council's Leisure Centre's and remaining Council properties.

3. Create nature diverse places for people to live in

- Establish more wildlife corridors across the district by adjusting our mowing regime.
- Engage with the local community to agree ongoing management of Bramber Brooks.
- Review the use of herbicide on Council managed land.
- Investigate rewilding techniques for managing key sites.
- Review the Council's use of livestock for managing key sites.

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

- Work in partnership with West Sussex Councils to develop a local nature recovery network strategy.
- Review the success of the Wilder Horsham District initiative and develop a proposal to extend the project.
- Investigate opportunities across the District to enhance habitats whilst also locking in carbon.

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

- Review our dog waste collection service to ensure it continues to meet the needs of our communities.
- Introduce a new online portal to provide better service provision to Green Waste and Commercial Waste customers.
- Review and explore the feasibility of additional waste prevention and recycling programmes.
- Plan and take necessary actions to prepare for the introduction of a food waste collection service.

6. Create safer routes for cycling and walking

- Implement 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

- Continue the 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.
- Work in partnership with other West Sussex Councils to deliver further rounds of a roof top solar scheme for residents and businesses.

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.
- Support rural businesses and community groups with development grants.

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

- Identify buildings in rural areas and Horsham town centre for potential co-working venues and contribute to the capital cost of setting the facilities up.

3. Help deliver Horsham's first Business Improvement District

- Work in collaboration with the BID to improve the economic vitality of the town centre.

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 and provide accessible travel options in Blackhorse Way, Horsham
- Establish an infrastructure development fund for Billingshurst.

5. Promote business and culture with new events

- Continue to deliver a programme of community events, to promote a range of free and low cost activities for families including Sussex Sounds, Love Parks week and school holiday activities.
- Deliver a large, free community event to bring people together and celebrate the District.
- Explore the feasibility of expanding Sussex Sounds to other markets across the District.

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

- Initiate conversations regarding public transport provision at strategic sites.

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

- Review the situation for residents who are unable to access services digitally.
- Promote volunteering to Health and Wellbeing service users with opportunities such as Horsham Green Gym, Men in Shed groups or the various walking groups.

2. Engage and involve parishes and neighbourhood councils more

- Increase engagement with Horsham Association of Local Councils.
- Work with Parish Councils, Traders' Associations and Community Partnerships to support our High Streets and build business resilience.
- Implement new Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) governance arrangements for the unparished area of Horsham Town.

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 engagement

- Implement the findings of the Governance Peer Challenge.
- Review the governance and structure of planning committees.

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

- 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

- Facilitate residents' reporting of highways issues.

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

- Review the fees and charges annually.
- Set out a plan to balance the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

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

- Create an asset management strategy, including The Capitol, leisure centres and car parks.
- Agree a strategy for the future of Broadbridge Heath running track.
- Develop and implement the Council's animal welfare policy.

Key Performance Indicators 2024/25

Appendix 2

- Percentage of payments made online
- Total parking income
- Percentage of invoices paid on time
- Total number of Community Trigger activations
- Number of voluntary organisations supported through advice and enablement
- Number of volunteers referred via the Voluntary Sector Support Service
- Less than 5% of incoming calls abandoned
- Speed of decision making on major planning applications
- Speed of decision making on non-major planning applications
- Number of households in temporary accommodation
 - Of which number of households in B&B accommodation
- Number of Health & Wellbeing Interventions for working age residents
- Number of Health & Wellbeing Interventions for over working age residents
- Attendance at sports centres
- Overall ticket sales at The Capitol
- Total attendance at Horsham Museum
- Recycling rate % (tonnage)
- Number of refuse, recycling and garden waste collections confirmed as missed per 100,000
- Quality of recycling - % contamination rate
- Percentage of FOI requests responded to within 20 days
- Total sickness rate (excluding leaver sickness)
- Customer assurance – Revenues and Benefits service
- Combined speed of processing for new revenues and benefits claims and change of circumstances
- Quality Assurance – Local Authority Error

- In year collection of Council Tax
- In year collection of Business Rates
- Arrears collection of Council Tax
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