



**CHILDREN AND FAMILIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE: 2
NOVEMBER 2021**

ENGAGEMENT ON THE COUNCIL'S STRATEGIC PLAN

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to seek the views of the Committee on the draft Strategic Plan (2022-26), a copy of which is appended to this report. A 12-week public consultation is set to commence on 1 November 2021, subject to approval being given by the Cabinet at its meeting on 26 October 2021.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

2. The Strategic Plan is complemented by the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) which sets out a financial plan supporting the priorities in the Strategic Plan, as well as by the Strategic Change Portfolio which outlines how the Council will transform local services in response to national and local drivers for change whilst seeking to maintain or improve outcomes. The Plan is also underpinned by Departmental Business Plans and strategies which provide further detail on how the Council will deliver the aims and actions in the Plan.
3. On 6 December 2017, the County Council approved the current Strategic Plan (2018-22). This Plan was based on five aspirational outcomes which described the County Council's vision for Leicestershire. On 15 May 2019, the County Council declared a climate emergency. On 8 July 2020, the County Council approved a revised version of the Plan (still to expire in 2022) to reflect the Council's declaration of a climate emergency, with recognition that it would need to be revisited as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Background

4. The Strategic Plan sets out the Council's ambitions and priorities for the next four years. It outlines what it aims to achieve and how it intends to do it.
5. The current Plan is due to expire in 2022. Work has been undertaken to review and refresh the Plan and to re-assess the Council's strategic priorities, particularly in light of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Plan Structure and Contents

6. The draft Plan (2022-26) is based on five strategic outcomes which describe the Council's vision for Leicestershire. Each outcome includes four or five sub-outcomes which will need to be achieved to deliver the outcome.
7. The outcomes are broad and aspirational, reflecting the County Council's significant and wide-ranging responsibilities and capacity to influence. Therefore, to ensure that the Plan provides a clear strategic direction for the Council, it also includes specific aims and actions to deliver each outcome over the next four years.
8. The Plan also includes a section on 'enabling services' which is intended to highlight the contributions of corporate functions to outcome delivery as well as sustaining good governance. This is followed by a section on the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) which highlights the Council's aims and actions to maintain a balanced budget whilst protecting frontline services and weathering the coronavirus crisis. Finally, there is a section on the Strategic Change Portfolio, summarising the aims and actions of the four key pillars of this internal transformation programme.

Strategic Outcomes

9. The outcomes, which are detailed below, are intended to broadly reflect the remits of departments and the portfolios of lead members. However, successful delivery of the Plan will rely upon departments sharing ownership of the outcomes in addition to the outcomes being reflected in all relevant Council plans and strategies. Outcome Boards, consisting of representatives from all Department Management Teams in addition to corporate services, will review and inform the development of Council strategies to ensure that they reflect the aims of their respective outcomes.

- 'Clean, Green Future' Outcome: *Reflects the need to protect and enhance the environment and tackle climate change, biodiversity loss and unsustainable resource usage.*

Sub-outcomes:

- People act now to tackle climate change
- Nature and the local environment are valued, protected and enhanced
- Resources are used in an environmentally sustainable way
- The economy and infrastructure are low carbon and environmentally-friendly.

- 'Great Communities' Outcome: *Aims to ensure Leicestershire has thriving, inclusive communities in which people support each other and take responsibility for their local area.*

Sub-outcomes:

- Diversity is celebrated and people feel welcome and included
- People participate in service design and delivery
- Communities are prepared for and resilient to emergencies
- Cultural and historical heritage are enjoyed and conserved

- People support each other through volunteering.
- ‘Improving Opportunities’ Outcome: *Aims for all children to get the best start for life and to have access to a good quality education. Also aims for everyone to have the opportunities they need to fulfil their potential.*

Sub-outcomes:

- Every child gets the best start for life
- Every child has access to good quality education
- Families are self-sufficient and enabled to be resilient
- Everyone is able to aim high and reach their full potential.
- ‘Strong Economy, Transport and Infrastructure’ Outcome: *Aims to ensure that we build a productive, inclusive and sustainable economy at the cutting edge of science, technology and engineering. Also reflects the need for our infrastructure to meet the demands of a growing population and economy.*

Sub-outcomes:

- There is close alignment between skills supply and employer demand
- Leicestershire has the infrastructure for sustainable growth
- Leicestershire is an attractive place where businesses can flourish
- Economic growth delivers increased prosperity for all
- Leicestershire has the right homes in the right places to meet needs.
- ‘Keeping People Safe and Well’ Outcome: *Aims to ensure the people of Leicestershire have the opportunities and support they need to take control of their health and wellbeing. Also reflects the need to ensure people are safe and protected from harm.*

Sub-outcomes:

- People are safe in their daily lives
- People enjoy long lives in good health
- People at the most risk are protected from harm
- Carers and people with care needs are supported to live active, independent, and fulfilling lives.

Progress and Performance Monitoring

10. The Council’s progress in delivering these outcomes will be monitored by the Outcome Boards, which will provide six-monthly reports to the Corporate Management Team to highlight key achievements, challenges and priorities. The Council’s Overview and Scrutiny Committees will continue to receive quarterly updates on departmental performance for the areas they cover.

Children and Families

11. The outcome in the draft Strategic Plan with the most direct links with Children and Family Services is the 'Improving Opportunities' outcome, which aims to support disadvantaged people (primarily disadvantaged children and families) to access the opportunities they need to fulfil their potential. Children and Family Services also has strong links with the 'Keeping People Safe and Well' outcome, which covers the Council's duties to protect vulnerable people from harm and abuse.
12. However, the aims and actions of Children and Family Services are also embedded in other outcomes. For example, the 'Great Communities' outcome includes, for sub-outcome 6.5 'People support each other through volunteering', an aim to develop and maintain a volunteering offer in social care services and to support the development of Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector services which support children, young people and families. The 'Strong Economy, Transport and Infrastructure' outcome includes, for sub-outcome 8.1 'There is close alignment between skill supply and demand', aims and actions to work with partners to increase opportunities in the labour market for young people. Further, sub-outcome 8.4 'Economic growth delivers increased prosperity for all' aims to ensure that economic growth delivers increased prosperity for all, with a specific aim for growth in Gross Value Added (GVA) in the local economy to correspond with a reduction in the percentage of children eligible for free school meals.
13. The 'Improving Opportunities' outcome includes the following aims and actions of relevance to Children and Family Services.

Sub-outcome 7.1: 'Every child gets the best start in life'

Aim: Services working in more integrated and collaborative ways to support pre-school children and their families

Actions include:

- We will focus on strengthening collaboration between partners to improve early education, health and wellbeing outcomes for pre-school children
- We will work with partners across education, health and care to promote breastfeeding
- We will develop an integrated Early Years Pathway to ensure that vulnerable children are identified and supported early
- We will develop an integrated communication strategy to promote the 1001 Critical Days Children's Manifesto
- We will join up how services for pre-school children and their families report on performance to support understanding of our progress and where we need to improve
- We will help to ensure staff across health, care and education are informed about the needs of children with SEND and available support

Aim: Increase in the proportion of young children achieving a good level of development at foundation stage

Actions include:

- We will focus on narrowing the development gaps that affect children and families who are at the greatest disadvantage (e.g. those who live in poverty or have a poor home environment, have special educational needs and/or are in our care)

- We will support parents and families to build on their understanding of children's needs so that they are able to get their children off to a good start
- We will help families access free childcare and provide high-quality childcare and early education that is fully inclusive and accessible
- We will support childcare providers to offer sufficient high-quality early education
- We will protect and where possible strengthen the service provided by our Children and Family Wellbeing Centres
- We will provide greater clarity on what success looks like when children are ready for school and on how we can support schools to be ready

Sub-outcome 7.2 'Every child has access to good quality education'

Aim: Sufficient, high quality mainstream school places and specialist SEND provision to meet growing demand

Actions include:

- We will work with partners to ensure that admissions arrangements promote diversity and choice and meet the needs of vulnerable groups
- We will ensure a sufficient supply of high-quality school places by monitoring capacity and extending or building new schools where required
- We will implement an ambitious sufficiency programme to develop SEND provision across the local area, including development of resources in pre-school settings and mainstream schools to promote inclusion and expansion of existing special schools
- We will maintain strong arrangements for the management of our assets, and strengthen our relationship with Academies, to ensure all school buildings (irrespective of their designation and funding arrangements) are fit for purpose

Aim: Improved educational attainment amongst disadvantaged pupils (e.g. those in receipt of free school meals, with SEND)

Actions include:

- We will aim to help school pupils catch up with learning missed during the pandemic and continue to improve educational attainment
- We will focus on ensuring all children in our care access appropriate, stable education placements and positive educational experiences
- We will work with partners through the SEND and Inclusion Board to ensure the culture of all mainstream schools and providers is inclusive and staff are well-equipped and supported to meet the learning needs of the vast majority of children with SEND.
- We will work with further education colleges to develop opportunities for a more individualised learning experience for young people with SEND.
- We will focus on improving the quality of EHCPs and developing the EHCP process and Annual Reviews both within the local authority and between the local authority, clinical commissioning group and provider services
- We will ensure that when a child or young person needs move to a different educational provision or service, this is done in a timely manner with the appropriate information being made available so that needs are well understood

Sub-outcome 7.3 'Families are self-sufficient and enabled to be resilient'

Aims:

- Families are able to identify their own support networks and feel more able to deal with issues as they arise

- The Council continues to achieve its target for the number of families achieving significant and sustained progress

Actions include:

- We will develop the Leicestershire Information and Support Directory and Local Offer to help families access information, guidance, and support
- We will support the delivery of Citizens Advice services and crisis and hardship support for people in need
- We will work positively with parents and carers opting for EHE, offering a range of support to ensure that statutory duties are met
- We will work across the early help partnership to ensure agencies are able to identify families who may require additional support at the earliest possible opportunity, and will work with partners to make sure families receive the best response to their needs
- We will continue to prioritise investment in preventative services to help to avoid the need for children to become looked after. We will ensure children who are at risk of family breakdown receive timely and, if necessary, intensive support to help them to remain living with their families
- We will develop our support to young people who encounter emotional difficulties or require other targeted early help support

Sub-outcome 7.4 Everyone is able to aim high and reach their full potential

Aim: Below national average rate of vulnerable young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET)

Actions include:

- We will challenge schools in relation to statutory individualised careers guidance for vulnerable groups
- We will monitor the progress of learners beyond age 16 to ensure good progress and identify those at risk of becoming NEET in order to target them for additional support
- We will identify the interests and skills of children in our care and provide them with information and advice about educational and career options
- We will raise employers' awareness of the issues affecting care leavers to help ensure they offer the right support to care leaver employees
- Through our Teenagers with Babies Action Group, we will deliver actions to reduce NEET amongst Teenage parents, such as ensuring seamless support pathways and improving access to educational opportunities
- Our Youth Offending Team will provide young offenders with dedicated Education Worker and Careers Advisors to ensure they are actively engaged in education, training or employment
- We will expand the range of alternative providers for young offenders and others for whom formal educational placements are not suitable

14. The 'Keeping People Safe and Well' outcome includes the following aims and actions of relevance to Children and Family Services.

Sub-outcome 9.1 People are safe in their daily lives

Aim: Fewer children and young people involved in and impacted by criminal behaviour

Actions include:

- We will deliver a robust, whole-family approach to prevent children and young people from engaging in criminal behaviour
- We will work with partners to provide safe spaces for children and young people to play, without the risk of being groomed into criminal exploitation
- We will deliver preventative street-based work with young people targeted in areas with high levels of anti-social behaviour
- We will identify and address the exploitation of children and young people and provide care and support to those affected

Sub-outcome 9.2 People at the most risk are protected from harm

Aim: Safeguarding approaches are effective in recovery from Covid-19 and informed by learning from the pandemic

Actions include:

- We will focus on identifying and responding to hidden harm (e.g. self-neglect, mental ill-health and/or learning disabilities, domestic abuse)
- We will support care homes with Infection Control, vaccination, and Personal Protective Equipment support to minimise Covid-19 outbreaks
- We will risk assess and quality assure care providers to ensure services are safe and protect vulnerable children and adults
- We will work with partners to review the response to and forward implications of Covid-19 and recovery work regarding safeguarding

Aim: Vulnerable people are identified and protected from harm and abuse

Actions include:

- We will improve how we work with families to safeguard babies by ensuring robust procedures are in place and raising awareness of risk factors
- We will develop a communications strategy to support partners to deliver universal safety messages to children and young people
- We will work with partners to develop joint responses to risk including child sexual exploitation, domestic abuse, gangs, missing from home
- We will focus on combatting sexual violence and domestic abuse by developing a Domestic Abuse Strategy, protecting all survivors and their families in safe and appropriate accommodation
- We will develop trauma-informed practices and offer direct work to support children to recover from Adverse Childhood Experiences
- We will ensure that work with young people to reduce risk and vulnerability assists prevention of adult safeguarding need

Consultation and Timetable for Decisions

15. Development of the Plan has so far included engagement with lead officers for supporting strategies and the current (2018-22) outcomes, Department Management Teams, Corporate Management Team and the Lead Member for Community and Staff Relations.
16. Subject to the Cabinet approval at its meeting on 26 October 2021, a 12-week public consultation on the Plan will begin on 1 November 2021 and run until 21 January 2022. As part of the consultation all of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees and the Scrutiny Commission (from 1 -17 November), and key

partnership boards such as the Children and Families Partnership and Health and Wellbeing Board (17 and 25 November respectively) will be provided with an opportunity to comment on the draft Plan.

17. Residents, community groups and partner organisations will also be invited to provide feedback on the draft Plan through a variety of methods including a public survey and meetings in which the Plan will be presented and reviewed.
18. Findings from the consultation will be used to inform development of the final Plan and it is intended that, in March 2022, a report will be presented to the Scrutiny Commission for consideration and then to the Cabinet presenting the outcome of the consultation and seeking agreement for the revised draft Plan to be submitted to the County Council for approval on 18 May 2022.

Resource Implications

19. All actions within the Plan are from existing service/business plans and strategies. As such, there should not be any additional resource investment required to deliver the Plan beyond that which has already been approved.
20. However, as referenced in Section 11 of the Plan ('Monitoring Outcome Delivery'), officer resources will be required to monitor delivery of the Plan and ensure that the strategic outcomes are reflected in and supported by all relevant underpinning Council plans and strategies. These tasks will be carried out by Outcome Boards, consisting of representatives from departments and corporate services. As delivery of the Plan will require continued collaboration with partner services, representatives from the Outcome Boards will interact with relevant partnership boards to monitor outcome delivery and promote integration of strategies.
21. The number of Outcome Boards has been reduced following a review of outcome delivery arrangements. Therefore, fewer officer resources will be required than have been utilised to monitor and support delivery of the current (2018-22) Plan.
22. The Director of Corporate Resources and Director of Law and Governance have been consulted on the Plan and will have a further opportunity to comment following the public consultation (prior to the March 2022 Cabinet meeting).

Conclusions

23. The Committee is asked to provide its views on the draft Strategic Plan (2022-26) as set out in the Appendix, including the content highlighted in this report.

Background papers

[Leicestershire County Council Strategic Plan \(2018-2022\)](#) (Previous Plan)

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

24. None

Equality and Human Rights Implications

25. A screening assessment of the Strategic Plan concluded that a full impact assessment is not required. The Strategic Plan is a high-level document which reflects the content of existing Council plans and strategies in order to set out a clear summary of the Council's overall ambitions and delivery approach; it does not include new actions which could have Equality and Human Rights Implications.
26. The Plan will, however, have a positive impact as it promotes Equality and Human Rights, primarily by including, within the section on the 'Great Communities' outcome (see sub-section 6.1), specific aims and actions to deliver the sub-outcome: 'diversity is celebrated, and people feel welcome and included'. This sub-outcome highlights issues around community cohesion and hate crime along with specific actions which the Council will deliver over the next four years to address these issues. Equality and Human Rights are also embedded throughout the Plan.

Other Relevant Impact Assessments

Crime and Disorder Implications

27. There are no direct crime and disorder implications arising from this report. The Plan promotes community safety by including, within the section on the 'Keeping People Safe and Well' outcome (see sub-sections 9.1 and 9.2 of the appendix), specific aims and actions to deliver the sub-outcomes 'people are safe in their daily lives' and 'people at the most risk are protected from harm'.

Environmental Implications

28. The Plan raises the profile of environmental issues by including, within the section on the 'Clean, Green Future' outcome, aims and actions to tackle climate change and biodiversity loss and promote sustainable resource usage. Aims to ensure infrastructure supports the transition to net zero carbon emissions are also reflected in the section on the 'Strong Economy, Transport and Infrastructure' outcome (see sub-section 8.2 of the appendix).

Appendices

Appendix: Leicestershire County Council Strategic Plan (2022-26) **(Revised Plan)**

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