



**Corporate Policy and
Resources Committee**

Wednesday 8th March 2023

Subject: West Lindsey District Council Corporate Plan, 2023-2027

Report by:

Chief Executive

Contact Officer:

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Purpose / Summary:

To present West Lindsey District Council's
Corporate Plan, which covers the administrative
period 2023-2027

RECOMMENDATION(S):

1. That Members recommend to Council the Corporate Plan which covers the administrative period 2023-2027.

IMPLICATIONS

Legal:

None arising as a result of this report.

Financial: FIN/158/23/SL

Activity linked to delivery of the Corporate Plan is presented annually to Council via the Executive Business Plan, which informs the Council's Medium-Term Financial Plan. There are no financial implications arising specifically from this report. Individual projects, programmes or other activity related to delivery of the Corporate Plan will have financial implications attached as and when they are brought forward for member approval.

Staffing: N/A

There are no Human Resource implications arising from this report. The Corporate Plan has been developed in conjunction with Council staff through targeted engagement and through the business planning process to ensure it is ambitious but achievable, and that our staff support the aims and objectives. Staff engagement will continue throughout the next stages of developing, adopting and embedding the Corporate Plan, with the latter focusing on embedding the 'golden thread' and ensuring clear linkages to the appraisal process.

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights:

The Corporate Plan is designed to be inclusive and to serve the needs of the whole district. Equality Impact Assessments will be completed in full for any emerging projects, programmes or areas of work that emerge from the Corporate Plan.

Data Protection Implications:

None arising as a result of this report.

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities:

The strategic aims, objectives and key outcomes set out in this report are designed to align to the Council's commitments under its Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy. The report commits to embedding a 'green thread' throughout each of the three Corporate Plan themes. A review of the Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy and accompanying action plan is planned for 2023 which will ensure even greater alignment between our climate commitments, and the Corporate Plan.

Business Planning will identify key projects and programmes of work related to tackling climate change and the CESIA tool will be applied to these individually where they require a formal decision.

Section 17 Crime and Disorder Considerations:

The Corporate Plan includes a key focus on “clean, green and safe communities” which incorporates objectives relating to reducing anti-social behaviour and increasing people’s feelings of safety.

Health Implications:

The Plan includes the key strategic aim of reducing health inequalities, promoting healthy lifestyles and improving wellbeing across the district. Outcomes linked to this aim focus on appropriate housing solutions, enabling independent living, increasing levels of physical activity, reducing obesity, improving our skills base and improving housing standards. These are all intrinsically linked to health and wellbeing and will inform and align with the emerging District Health and Wellbeing Strategy which is currently in development.

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report :

None

Risk Assessment :

The Council’s Strategic Risk Register identifies risks directly related to delivery of the Corporate Plan. These risks are assigned to, and monitored by the Senior Management Team, as well as being presented bi-annually to the Council’s Governance and Audit Committee. The Strategic Risk Register will be updated following formal adoption of the Corporate Plan in June 2023, with the changes reported to the next available meeting of Governance and Audit Committee.

Call in and Urgency:

Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)

Yes

☐

No

x

Key Decision:

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications

Yes

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No

x

Introduction

The Council's current Corporate Plan runs to 2023 and, as such, is due to be reviewed. This report sets out the Council's proposed strategic aims, objectives and outcomes in the form of the revised Corporate Plan which covers the administrative period 2023-2027.

A copy of the Corporate Plan is attached as Appendix A, which members of this committee are asked to recommend for formal adoption at the meeting of Council in June 2023.

For context, this report also sets out the rationale for the proposals within the Corporate Plan, including the updated policy context, stakeholder engagement and the key design principles. An outline of the monitoring framework is included within the report to make clear how and where progress against the Council's priorities will be monitored, managed and reported.

Background

The Corporate Plan is the Council's flagship strategy, which sets out the strategic aims and objectives over a four-year period. It is the overarching policy document that informs all Council activity, driven by strategic and operational business planning. The Corporate Plan is informed by a number of factors including the national, regional and local policy context. In line with the Council's commitment to evidence-based decision making, the identified priorities are based on robust statistical evidence as set out in the Council's Annual State of the District Report.

The concept of the Corporate Plan is well-embedded across the organisation. A follow-up internal audit of the Corporate Plan and the 'Golden Thread' conducted in November 2021 returned an opinion of substantial assurance, particularly in relation to stakeholder engagement, communication and managing strategic risk. On that basis, members requested that officers conduct a refresh of the existing Corporate Plan, carrying over some key elements from the current document and updating other elements. The scope of the refresh is outlined below.

Out of Scope

As per the audit findings, the Corporate Plan vision, mission and values are well-embedded across the organisation. In particular, the values are used to inform the Behaviour Framework which guides recruitment and appraisal processes and shapes the culture of the organisation. In that context, the vision, mission and values remain unchanged and have been carried across into the new Corporate Plan (page 10 of Appendix A). The vision is that:

"West Lindsey is a great place to be, where people, businesses and communities can thrive and reach their full potential."

In Scope

The following changes have been made:

Updated policy context - The policy environment in which the Council operates has changed significantly since the current Corporate Plan was adopted in 2019. The new Plan has therefore been updated to reflect the

current policy position and emerging policy and legislative changes that may impact the local government sector in future. This is set out in summary on pages 4-9 of the document attached as Appendix A. The policy context is also monitored and updated annually in more detail in the Council's Executive Business Plan, which is presented to members alongside the Medium-Term Financial Plan as part of the annual budget setting meeting of Council.

A change in tone and language - As the Council's key strategic document, it is important that the Corporate Plan has a strong identity that instantly conveys its purpose. As such, it is recommended that the Corporate Plan is rebranded under the name "Moving Forward Together: Our Vision for West Lindsey (2023-2027)." This has a more inclusive feel and instantly denotes the purpose of the document to the reader. Additionally, the language has been updated throughout to be more inclusive, replacing more formal terms such as "the Council will" with "we will", for example. This not only serves to modernise the Corporate Plan, it creates a sense of belonging for staff and members in line with West Lindsey's 'One Council' ethos.

Updated strategic aims, objectives and outcomes – This represents the biggest change and forms the core of the document. The updated aims, objectives and outcomes have been written to reflect the priorities of members which have been identified over the past 12 months through member engagement sessions as set out later in this report.

Additionally, the aims and objectives have been written to reflect the policy context and planned changes in legislation, such as the Environment Act 2021, which will place new statutory obligations on the Council in respect of waste collection and recycling, environmental crime, and biodiversity net gain.

To ensure alignment with the Council's existing key strategies, the aims, objectives and outcomes have also been written to reflect current priorities such as those in the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan, or the Council's Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy. A list of key strategies and policies that are aligned to the Corporate Plan is included at the end of this report for information.

Stakeholder Engagement

In order to achieve buy in, accountability and ownership of the Corporate Plan and to ensure its successful delivery, early and continued stakeholder engagement is of paramount importance. A comprehensive stakeholder engagement plan has therefore been key to the development of the Corporate Plan over the last 12 months.

Member Engagement

The Corporate Plan reflects the priorities of elected members. As such, officers have worked closely with members over the past 12 months to understand emerging political priorities and ensure these are reflected in the Corporate Plan's strategic aims, objectives and outcomes. Engagement has included workshops, such as those undertaken as part of the development of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund Investment Plan to which all members were invited.

Additionally, all members were invited to take part in further workshops held in January 2023 to test the draft proposals and seek final feedback, which has been incorporated into the Corporate Plan document presented to this committee for approval.

Staff Engagement

The role of officers is to deliver the priorities of the Council. To prepare staff for the updated priorities, and to ensure delivery of these is incorporated into business planning and appraisals, a staff engagement programme has been rolled out in parallel with member engagement. Over the past 12 months, this has included regular briefings at staff Corporate Updates, attending individual team meetings at both the Guildhall and the Depot, and communicating key updates on the staff intranet.

To ensure the emerging aims and objectives are built into business planning, specific sessions were held with the Council's Wider Management Team during 2022 to communicate the proposals and receive feedback from Team Managers.

A Corporate Plan Development Day was held with the Senior Management Team in September 2022 to understand the findings from all stakeholder engagement sessions from a strategic perspective.

Staff consultation on the draft Corporate Plan has been undertaken throughout January 2023 into early February, offering all staff the opportunity to have their say on the content and design of the document. The results were positive and supportive of the proposed Corporate Plan; 88% of respondents said that they could see how their team would contribute to delivering the strategic aims and objectives. 100% of respondents liked the design and branding of the document and 97% of respondents felt that they had been sufficiently engaged and involved throughout the stages of developing the Corporate Plan. When asked what staff liked most about the new Corporate Plan, the responses can be summarised as follows:

- The proposals are based on clear evidence
- The aims and objectives are clear, concise and easy to understand
- I can see myself and my team reflected in the document
- The Corporate Plan is inclusive and feels like it belongs to the whole organisation
- The design is modern, professional and engaging
- "It is focused and inspiring and it makes me proud to reflect these values in my work."

When asked if there was anything they would change about the Corporate Plan, suggestions from staff can be summarised as follows, all of which have been actioned:

- Minor changes to design and layout
- Minor changes to language or wording

Engagement with all key stakeholders will continue following the adoption of the Corporate Plan to ensure the golden thread continues to be embedded across the organisation through business planning, performance management, project management and through staff appraisals.

Wider Stakeholder Engagement

Whilst the Corporate Plan sets objectives that are within the remit of the local authority, the Council has an important influencing and lobbying role, working with external partners to effect wider change. It is important that partner organisations understand the Council's key priorities for the next four years. Targeted engagement will therefore take place over the coming months with key partners to share the updated priorities.

Key Design Principles

The Corporate Plan is the Council's flagship strategy that drives all Council activity. Some key design principles have influenced the development of the Plan to ensure it can be successfully embedded and delivered over the next four years. These are for the Corporate Plan to be:

Ambitious – the Council has an ambitious vision for our people, our place and our council. It is therefore important that this is reflected in the aims, objectives and outcomes that have been identified across the three themes.

Strategic – for a strategy to be successful, it is important that the identified priorities are clear enough to be understood by all stakeholders, but high level enough to allow some degree of flexibility. This is particularly important given the rapidly changing policy environment in which the Council operates, including uncertainty regarding the long-term financial settlement beyond 2025. The aims, objectives and outcomes have therefore been designed to be strategic in nature; underpinned by a robust monitoring framework.

Supported by Key Stakeholders – for a strategy to be successfully adopted, implemented and embedded, support from key stakeholders is crucial. In recognition of this, a comprehensive programme of early and continuous stakeholder engagement has been undertaken over the past 12 months, as set out earlier in this report. This engagement will continue throughout the lifespan of the Corporate Plan to ensure effective delivery of the Council's priorities.

SMART – whilst the Corporate Plan is a strategic document, it is also important that aims and objectives are transparent and that progress against delivering the outcomes can be monitored. As a result, the Corporate Plan, and particularly the outcomes, have been designed to be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timebound, i.e. SMART. For the purposes of understanding aims, objectives and outcomes in the context of the Corporate Plan, these are defined as follows:

- **Aim** – a concise description of the overall goal or purpose. Similar to mission statements in intent, an aim should encapsulate the overall goal or purpose.
- **Objective** – a specific statement that defines what steps will be taken to deliver the desired outcome.

- Outcome - the end result of an intervention. Outcomes can be quantitative or qualitative, but should always be SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound). Outcomes are the measures by which success of a policy intervention is judged.

Source: adapted from Imperial College London

Aims, Objectives and Outcomes – A Summary

The main purpose of the Corporate Plan is to set out the strategic aims and objectives of the Council that will result in a number of desired outcomes. These have been split into the three main themes of Our People, Our Place and Our Council and can be summarised as follows:

Our People

This theme focuses on reducing health inequalities by improving communities and transforming places, ensuring appropriate housing solutions that enable independent living, and increasing opportunities for participation in sport, culture and leisure activities across the district. The key targets for Our People are:

To reduce...

- Obesity levels across all age groups
- Levels of inequality in the most deprived neighbourhoods
- Poverty levels, particularly child poverty and fuel poverty

To increase...

- Levels of physical activity
- Opportunities for participation in culture, leisure and sport
- Physical and mental health outcomes
- Employment and skills levels
- Housing standards
- Engagement in local communities

Our Place

The second theme centres on economic regeneration, quality housing and ensuring clean, green and safe communities. Key targets for Our Place are:

To reduce...

- Anti-social behaviour
- Household waste
- Levels of environmental crime

To increase...

- Economic performance and Gross Value Added
- Growth in the visitor economy
- The number of jobs and businesses
- Quality housing and improved housing standards
- Rural connectivity
- Increased recycling rates
- Investment through Section 106 to maximise funding opportunities
- Green space provision

Our Council

The final theme concentrates on West Lindsey as an organisation, particularly supporting staff and members to carry out their roles effectively in a way that delivers high performing, well governed, value for money services with customers at the heart. The key targets for Our Council are:

- A sustainable Medium Term Financial Plan that is aligned to the Corporate Plan
- High levels of customer satisfaction across all services
- Modern and sustainable services that offer multi-channel access for customers
- High performing services that consistently meet targets while delivering value for money
- Climate responsibility is on a par with fiscal responsibility in key decision-making
- Completion of an internal and external review of governance and risk management
- A 'whole systems' approach to data and intelligence that enables strategic understanding of current and future need and demand.
- Identification of additional commercial revenue streams and funding opportunities
- Implement the recommendations of the Together 24 Programme and plan for the evolution of services post-T24

The Corporate Plan Monitoring Framework

In setting out the Council's priorities, it is important that progress is monitored to ensure key aims and objectives are delivered. Members can therefore expect to see progress monitored and reported in the following ways:

The State of the District Report: produced on an annual basis, this is the Council's key strategic evidence base that monitors the effect of Corporate Plan interventions in a number of areas. The State of the District Report also enables early identification of emerging issues and opportunities so that interventions can be planned at the earliest opportunity. The Report is shared with members, staff and key stakeholders each year, as well as being published on the Council's website.

The Executive Business Plan: This annual document sets out the actions the Council will take to deliver the Corporate Plan objectives over a rolling three-year period. While the Corporate Plan sets out *what* the Council wants to achieve, the Executive Business Plan states *how* it will be achieved. Deliverables in the Executive Business Plan are identified through the business planning process and presented to the annual budget setting meeting of Council alongside the Medium-Term Financial Plan.

The Medium-Term Financial Plan: It is a statutory requirement for local authorities to produce a Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) for approval by elected members. This sets out the Council's spending plans in support of the Corporate Plan objectives, presenting a balanced budget and striving for value for money, and financial sustainability.

Business Planning: Every year, each team across the Council produces a business plan. This serves two purposes. Firstly, to clearly set out proposed business activity in support of delivering the Corporate Plan, informed by policy developments and encompassing short, medium and long-term proposals. This element is used to inform the Executive Business Plan. Secondly, business plans have an operational purpose, setting out business as usual activity and the resources required to deliver this. This element informs the day to day running of council services and informs staff appraisals. The Senior Management Team is accountable for business plans which are monitored through various avenues of the council's governance framework.

Performance Management: Each quarter the council monitors progress against a number of key performance indicators. Our performance management framework, known as Progress and Delivery sets ambitious targets for and is designed to deliver continuous learning and improvement. Performance is managed quarterly through the council's key policy committees. As part of the 2023-2024 review of Progress and Delivery, it is intended that the Council's key performance indicators are aligned more closely to the Corporate Plan aims and objectives. These measures and accompanying targets will be presented to this committee early in 2024 for approval, as per usual practice.

The Golden Thread: this is a well-established concept in local government and is the depiction of how an organisation embeds and aligns its strategic priorities into business activity down to the individual level. The golden thread enables ownership and accountability for performance at all levels of the organisation and aids individual staff in understanding how their role contributes to the delivery of high-level objectives. The annual staff appraisal process will be revised to ensure individual objectives are aligned with delivery of the Corporate Plan.

The Green Thread: this is a new concept, conceived by West Lindsey officers to reflect the commitments set out in the Council's Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy. As with the golden thread, the Council's commitment to becoming carbon net zero must be embedded into all areas of Council activity if it is to be successfully achieved. Rather than adding a fourth standalone 'Green' theme to the Corporate Plan, a green thread of aims, objectives and outcomes has been developed into the existing themes so that it becomes normalised across the organisation. As such, each strategic objective has at least one outcome that is aligned to the Council's priorities for the environment and sustainability. The concept of the green thread has been well received, with the idea already being used by partners in shaping the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan (<https://www.lgcplus.com/politics/climate-change/why-there-is-green-thread-through-central-lincolnshires-new-local-plan-16-09-2022/>).

Summary

In line with the remit given to officers, the Corporate Plan presented to this committee is a refresh of current strategic priorities, updated to reflect the current policy context, evidence base and opportunities available to the local authority over the next four years. Comprehensive stakeholder engagement

has been at the heart of its development, with frequent opportunities for all members and staff to be involved in designing and refining the Corporate Plan over the past 12 months. The strategic aims and objectives have been carefully aligned to existing priorities, commitments and key pieces of legislation. Most importantly, the Corporate Plan, Our Vision for West Lindsey, has been written to reflect the priorities of elected members and ensure the district remains a great place to be. Taking all of that into account, members of this committee are asked to recommend the Corporate Plan is formally adopted at the next scheduled meeting of Council in June 2023.

Policies and Strategies Linked to the Corporate Plan

The following list identifies those policies, plans and strategies that have influenced and shaped the priorities identified in the Council's new Corporate Plan. Going forward, new or revised policies and strategies will be written to align with the Council's strategic priorities in the new Corporate Plan.

- Central Lincolnshire Local Plan
- Customer Experience Strategy
- Economic Recovery Plan
- Elections Bill
- Environment Act, 2021
- Executive Business Plan 2023/2024 – 2025/2026
- Greater Lincolnshire Local Industrial Strategy
- Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill
- UK Shared Prosperity Fund Local Investment Plan (including Parks Fund and Rural Prosperity Fund)
- West Lindsey Cultural Strategy Action Plan
- West Lindsey Environment, Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy
- West Lindsey Health and Wellbeing Strategy (emerging)
- West Lindsey Housing Strategy
- West Lindsey Visitor Economy Strategy