

## **Corporate Plan 2024 - 2025**

### Report of the Director of Performance and Partnerships

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Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Cabinet (and confirmation under the provisions of the Council's Constitution) before taking effect.

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#### **1) Recommendations**

It is recommended that Cabinet:

- a) Note the achievements against the areas of focus in the Corporate Plan 2023/24.
- b) Approve the proposed areas of focus for the Corporate Plan 2024/25 and Directorate priorities for improvement in 2024/25.
- c) Endorse the publication of an Annual Report that describes the Corporate Plan; Directorates' priorities and progress with the Council's "Best Place" Strategic Plan.
- d) Note that from November 2024 the Corporate Plan 2024/25 will be monitored through the Council's new corporate performance framework.

#### **2) Introduction**

In recent times the Council has experienced an unprecedented level of pressure on its finances and demand for its services. The Council has also overseen changes to its senior officer team which started with the appointment of the new Chief Executive in early 2023.

This context has led the Council to adopt a two-year programme of transformation that has been categorised as a year to "Build the Foundations" (2023/24) in order to stabilise the Council's finances and reset services. In the second year (ie 2024/25), the theme will be "Improving and Learning" to escalate performance during the final year of the current Strategic Plan.

On 12<sup>th</sup> July 2023, Cabinet considered a report on the Council's "Best Place" Strategic Plan and the Corporate Plan 2023/24 (\*min 356 refers). The Cabinet affirmed its commitment to its Strategic Plan 2021 – 2025 and agreed the Corporate Plan's six areas of focus for 2023/24.

This report sets out progress against those six areas of focus for 2023/24 and proposes the Corporate Plan for 2024/25 together with Directorate improvement priorities for 2024/25.

Subject to Cabinet's views, an Annual Report will be published covering the Corporate Plans; Directorate improvement priorities and progress with the Council's overall "Best Place" Strategic Plan 2021-2025.

### 3) Corporate Plan 2023/24: Building the Foundations

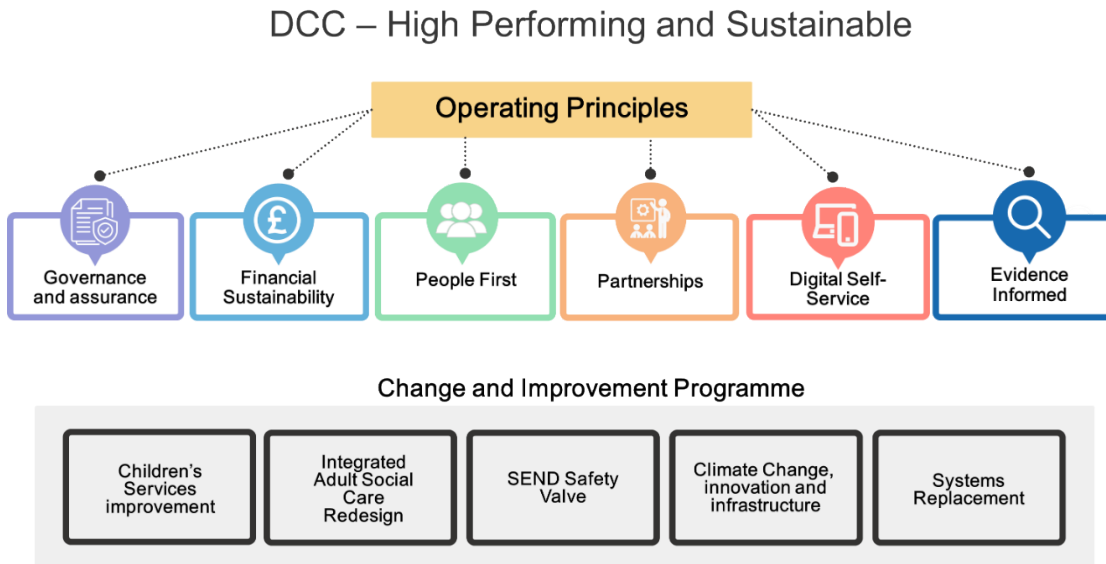
Delivery against the agreed six areas of focus for the Corporate Plan 2023/24 is set out in the table below:

| No | Area of focus                                | Delivery  |
|----|--|---|
| 1  | Governance and performance review            | <p>A Member-led Governance Working Group has undertaken a root and branch review of the Council's governance arrangements and has made the following changes in the following areas to the Council's Constitution:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial regulations</li> <li>• Key decisions</li> <li>• Policy framework</li> <li>• Decision making</li> <li>• Public participation and consultation</li> <li>• Partnership.</li> </ul>   |
| 2  | Value for money and financial sustainability | <p>A range of measures have been undertaken to ensure the future financial sustainability of the Council's finance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review of staff resource and best use of talent and skills</li> <li>• Review of all contracts to ensure Best Value</li> <li>• Development of policy around income generation and full cost recovery programmes</li> <li>• Best use of assets to reduce costs and support community use.</li> <li>• Safety Valve Agreement 2023/24 to 2031/32 with the Department for Education.</li> </ul> |
| 3  | People Strategy                              | <p>The People Strategy and accompanying Action Plan have been agreed and actions are being taken forward in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Voice of staff</li> <li>• Recruitment</li> <li>• Reward</li> <li>• Wellbeing</li> <li>• Belonging</li> <li>• Learning.</li> <li>• Care Leavers Action Plan.</li> </ul>  |
| 4  | Replacement systems                          | <p>Work is well underway to replace two major IT systems:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Replacement of FINEST – the new finance system will simplify financial management and access to information and budget control tools.</li> <li>• Adult Social Care CareFirst – this will introduce a new case management system for Adult Social Care to improve efficiency. It will support functionality for Children and Young People's case management.</li> </ul>   |
| 5  | Equality, diversity and inclusion            | <p>Good progress has been made with the Race Equality Action Plan and the Council was awarded Bronze Trailblazer status by Race Equality Matters in July 2023. The Equality Commission approved by Cabinet in February 2023 will now drive improvement through the refreshed Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan which</p>  |

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|   |                                  | was published in June 2024. Progress is being reported to the Corporate, Infrastructure and Regulatory Services Committee every six months.  |
| 6 | Devon and Torbay Devolution Deal | <p>On 25 January 2024, Government announced the proposed devolution deal with Devon and Torbay. The Deal set out an initial range of powers and funding to the area to tackle local priorities – training and reskilling, public transport, affordable housing, investment and support for local business with green jobs to increase the area’s productivity and pay.</p> <p>Following public consultation during March 2024 the final proposal for the Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority was submitted to Government in May 2024. The proposal now lies with the new Government to make a decision about the secondary legislation that would bring the CCA into being.</p> |

#### 4) Corporate Plan 2024/25: Improving and Learning

On 13 March 2024 Cabinet approved (minute 497 refers) the authority’s operating principles and established three Change and Improvement Boards. It also approved five change programmes each of which is led by a Change Champion working cross-organisationally as shown in the diagram below.



The six proposed Corporate Priorities for action in 2024/25 are:

- Secure better outcomes for our children through working with key partners.
- Develop an investment plan for our road network.
- Embed the Corporate Performance Framework and a culture of continuous improvement.
- Delivering our change and improvement programme including modernising processes through digital solutions.

- Working together with citizens - 2024/25 focus on Highways and Transport.
- Building relationships with partners to facilitate improved and targeted community services.

The proposed priorities have been informed by the outcomes of the Members' Day held on 11 June 2024.

### Why these are our proposed six Corporate Plan priorities for 2024/25

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| <p><b>1. Secure better outcomes for our children through working with key partners</b></p>  |
| <p>The Council is continuing its journey of improvement in services for children and young people and expects a graded Ofsted inspection in the Autumn of 2024. Improvements are being evidenced in relation to practice, and these need to be matched by evidencing best outcomes for children and young people and the delivery of services which provide value for money and sufficiency of placements. The SEND Transformation Programme is in place to improve outcomes for children with additional learning needs. The challenge for the partnership driven Local Area SEND plan is to work with parents and partners to increase inclusion and improved outcomes through co-produced solutions. Partnership working with schools, the Police, NHS and district councils is essential to improve joint working arrangements, including the delivery of our respective statutory duties including housing and safeguarding. The improvement of Children's Services remains a primary focus for the whole Council in the coming year, working with the Department for Education.</p> <p>We will continue to work through the Improvement Partnership Board with our partners on improving outcomes for social care with a strong focus on professional practice improvement and our relational approach with children and families. This work is overseen by the Commissioner who has been appointed by the Secretary of State. The Commissioner also monitors and advises on our own improvement actions as a Council in all matters linked to social care.</p> |
| <p><b>2. Develop an investment plan for our road network.</b></p>   |
| <p>The Council has listened to feedback from residents and communities and understands that improvement to our road network is a priority. Devon has one of the largest road networks in the country however investment in our roads has suffered over the last ten years from austerity, the pandemic, cost of living crisis and increasingly severe weather. The Council has this year invested an additional £12m in dealing with road repairs such as safety defects but this investment is insufficient to address all the problems. An investment plan for Devon's road network will bring together the case for change including benchmarks with other local authorities, the evidence to lobby Government and the opportunity to explore different ways of funding the improvements.</p>  |
| <p><b>3. Embed the Corporate Performance Framework and a culture of continuous improvement</b></p>  |
| <p>Having a corporate performance framework and reporting system in place supported by a robust operational focus on continuous improvement will help deliver the goals of financial sustainability and service improvement. The Council is undertaking a significant improvement programme to address under performance and five transformation programmes. The new arrangements will tie together performance, the change programmes and risk management systems with strategic, directorate and service level performance information and will provide the transparency for Members and the public on how the Council is doing in delivering best value for citizens.</p>  |

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| 4. Delivering our change and improvement programme including modernising processes through digital solutions  |
| Modernising the Council is key to future sustainability of the Council and the services provided to the people of Devon. There are five key change programmes, these include embracing new technology and ways of working to influence that change. This will enable the Council to deliver service efficiencies that can improve the customer experience and access but also enable savings as greater automation is introduced.   |
| 5. Working together with citizens in 2024/25 - focus on highways and transport.   |
| During 2023/24 we focused on improving engagement with families to support developing the SEND Improvement Plan. In 2024/25 the focus will be on engagement with residents focusing on our roads and transport services. Devon has one of the largest road networks in the country, with hotspots for road traffic accidents and fatalities, particularly in more deprived rural areas. Roads and transport issues are a significant proportion of the feedback the Council receives. The Council wants to engage with citizens to find solutions to their concerns.  |
| 6. Building relationships with partners to facilitate improved and targeted community services.   |
| <p>The Council will build on existing partnerships and strong relationships with the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector, district councils and towns and parishes to sustain local services, support and facilities. The Council and the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Assembly are set to sign a Civic Agreement outlining shared objectives to address key challenges and partnership opportunities. Early discussions have begun on a similar arrangement with the Devon Association of Local Councils (DALC).</p> <p>Work needs to focus on the most vulnerable and at risk in our communities and where needs are greatest, whilst working with people and communities to facilitate access, alongside partners, to support and buildings they can use locally.</p> <p>Through change programmes such as the Family Hubs the Council will engage in localities to join up a blend of targeted intervention alongside broad community led support in local communities.</p> |

## 5) Directorate improvement priorities 2024/25

Through each of the Directorate Plans the following improvement priorities will be taken forward in 2024/25. Each Directorate Plan will set out targets and key measures for the improvement priorities listed below. A reporting cycle will be established to show progress.

| Directorate                         | Improvement priorities 2024/25  |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Children and Young People's Futures | <p><b>Priorities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve social work practice, develop the scrutiny of the quality assurance framework and exit children's social care out of intervention.</li> <li>• Improve the sufficiency of placements and ensure that the right children access the right service at the right time.</li> </ul> |

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|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve outcomes for children in care and care experienced young people through positive progress against our Corporate Parenting priorities.</li> <li>• Continue to develop and improve the local authority and its partners transformation and approach to SEND.</li> <li>• Reduce the numbers of permanent and fixed term exclusions, persistent and severe absence rates and work directly with schools and education colleagues to continue to improve attendance and inclusive practice for all children.</li> </ul> <p><b>Sustainability</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure all services deliver the best value for money and keep children safe from harm.</li> <li>• Work with the DfE to meet the requirements of the DfE Safety Valve.</li> <li>• Develop the effectiveness of the Place Called Home Board to ensure sufficiency and quality for all placements for children in our care and to provide assurance of quality and value for money across foster care, residential, and in-house provision arrangements.</li> <li>• Develop and promote the conditions for a positive, healthy and sustainable permanent workforce. Increasing the recruitment and retention of high-quality staff, including newly qualified social workers thereby reducing the authorities reliance on agency staff.</li> </ul> <p><b>Change programme</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve integration of service so that no child is left behind.</li> </ul> <p><b>Technology</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with new technologies to make sure that services are accessible to all families.</li> </ul> |
| Climate Change, Environment and Transport | <p><b>Engagement with citizens</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with DALC to strengthen relationships with Parish and Town Councils.</li> <li>• Improve proactive communication with residents and communities about programmes of work and schemes.</li> <li>• Work with key stakeholders through our Bus Forum to deliver Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) schemes and wider strategy around public transport.</li> </ul> <p><b>Supporting Public Transport Recovery</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivering the updated BSIP that is aligned to the Council's response to Government consultation on the National Bus Strategy.</li> </ul> <p><b>Reducing people being killed or seriously injured on our roads</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with Vision Zero South West partners to develop pilot schemes to increase activity around Safer Roads and Safer Road Use (behaviours).</li> </ul>  |

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|                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gain Cabinet approval for A361 Safer Roads Fund corridor improvement scheme - pilot for AI cameras on seatbelt / mobile phone use.</li> <li>• Identify collision cluster locations / high harm routes to influence future maintenance priority process.</li> </ul> <p><b>Condition of Rural Roads</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Produce a Highway Investment Plan that aims to halt the continued decline of rural roads.</li> <li>• Reduce the backlog of drainage issues.</li> </ul>   |
| Finance and Public Value       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve procurement, commissioning, and contract management by creation of a Commissioning Board.</li> <li>• The go live of our new finance system and support change across the authority to self-service.</li> <li>• Partnership working with Directorates to create a sustainable 5-year medium term financial plan.</li> </ul>  |
| Integrated Adult Care Services | <p><b>Improve practice quality and productivity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safeguarding Governance Group improvement programme.</li> <li>• Practice Quality Assurance Group improvement programme.</li> <li>• Productivity improvement e.g. via Care Management System replacement.</li> </ul> <p><b>Improve services in response to feedback from their users</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Joint work with Public Health on prevention, early intervention, information/advice/signposting.</li> <li>• Co-produce front door arrangements.</li> <li>• Address carer isolation via greater access to breaks.</li> </ul> <p><b>Maintain financial and market sustainability</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivery of 2024-25 savings plan.</li> <li>• Strategic development of Medium Term Financial Strategy.</li> <li>• Address sufficiency gaps in market, e.g. care homes that meet complex needs.</li> </ul> |
| Legal and Democratic Services  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete the root to branch governance review and embed good governance across the Council.</li> <li>• Review and implement a consultation strategy for the Council.</li> <li>• Continue the work of the Equality Commission and action the equality action plan.</li> <li>• Champion the “Think Local” protocol and support management and induction training to embed good practice.</li> <li>• Ensure that legal services are shaped to the business needs and delivering value for money and a financially sustainable structure.</li> </ul>  |
| People and Culture             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focusing on the delivery of the Voice and Learning elements of the People Strategy.</li> <li>• Enabling increased workforce agility.</li> <li>• Creating a financially sustainable workforce structure.</li> </ul>  |
| Performance and Partnerships   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support the delivery of improvement and performance for the Authority through setting up a performance function providing insight, intelligence and benchmarking.</li> </ul>  |

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|                                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a Partnership framework and approach for the Council to improve the effectiveness of relationships with key stakeholders.</li> <li>• Establish the Devon and Torbay Combined County Authority and Team Devon Joint Committee.</li> <li>• Improve the careers and employment outcomes for young people including care experienced through re-designing the Council's careers and employment service with a focus on places with high levels of youth unemployment and those not in education, employment or training.</li> <li>• Working in partnership with business and other stakeholders, influence and respond to new policies, funding opportunities and priorities set by the next Government to improve economic prosperity, skills levels, housing and productivity across our communities.</li> </ul>  |
| Public Health and Communities        | <p><b>Best Value</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivery of best value in the recommissioning of the sexual and reproductive health and domestic abuse services.</li> </ul> <p><b>Evidence Informed</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure decisions are evidence informed, focusing on prevention and early intervention within key areas including, corporate parenting, ageing well and keeping communities safe.</li> </ul> <p><b>Targeted work</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus work on the most vulnerable individuals, families and communities within Devon to help tackle inequalities.</li> </ul>   |
| Transformation and Business Services | <p><b>Organisational Resilience:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring the Council is resilient where an event or incident occurs in relation to workforce agility and infrastructure.</li> <li>• Embedding a systems, culture and processes which ensure we have effective business continuity plans in place.</li> </ul> <p><b>Change Programme</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence cross-organisational improvement through the Change Programme Priorities</li> <li>• Review the Council's property assets aligned to the Council's agreed Property Strategy to meet capital receipt targets and repurpose assets to improve services and reduce costs.</li> </ul> <p><b>Technology:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementing a 'front door' portal for DCC services</li> <li>• Implementing an effective 'portal' for complaints</li> <li>• Rapid deployment of digital dictation across support services to increase productivity and reduce resource requirement.</li> </ul> |



## **6) Monitoring progress - Corporate Performance Framework**

There is a separate report on the meeting agenda covering the introduction of the Corporate Performance Framework. From November 2024, Cabinet will receive quarterly performance reports setting out a dashboard of key performance indicators together with a commentary on progress against the proposed Corporate Plan 2024/25 and Directorate improvement priorities 2024/25 set out above.

## **7) Strategic Plan**

The document is one of a suite of reports managing performance against our Strategic Plan 2021 – 2025 commitments.

## **8) Financial Considerations**

The agreement of the Corporate Plan 2024/25 and Directorate Improvement priorities does not have any direct financial implications requiring approval through this report. The Corporate Plan provides the principles and priorities that support resource planning and financial decision making within the agreed budget for 2024/25.

## **9) Legal Considerations**

All local authorities have a duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which their functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The Corporate Plan sets out how that duty will be discharged during 2024/25.

Performance will form part of the work programmes of Scrutiny Committees, alongside the improvement boards that have been established and a regular performance reporting cycle to Cabinet will begin in November 2024.

## **10) Environmental Impact Considerations (Including Climate Change, Sustainability and Socio-economic)**

There are no direct environmental related issues arising from the recommendation in this report.

## **11) Equality Considerations**

Under the Equality Act 2010, the Council has a legal duty to give due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality and foster good relations for protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation. All key decisions on policy and service change in relation to corporate and directorate priorities undergo an equality impact assessment.

## **12) Risk Management Considerations**

The Corporate Plan will be managed through the Council's new Corporate Performance Framework and will strengthen links and have regard to our corporate risk management arrangements.

### **13) Conclusions**

The proposed Corporate Plan and Directorate improvement priorities for 2024/25 will deliver against the Strategic Plan priorities in its final year. It is part of a suite of documents setting out the arrangements that will improve corporate grip, control and delivery in our drive for continuous improvement.

#### **Keri Denton**

Director of Performance and Partnerships

#### **Electoral Divisions: All**

Cabinet Member for Policy, Corporate and Asset Management: Councillor James McInnes

#### **Local Government Act 1972: List of background papers**

Nil

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