

Brighton & Hove City Council

Cabinet

Agenda Item 21

Subject: Council Plan Refresh

Date of meeting: 17 July 2025

Report of: Leader of the Council

Contact Officer: Name: Chief Executive
Email: jess.gibbons@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Ward(s) affected: All

Key Decision: Yes

Reasons Key: Is significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more electoral divisions (wards).

For general release

1. Purpose of the report and policy context

- 1.1 The Council Plan 2023-2027 is the council's main strategic document. It sets out our vision for a 'A better Brighton & Hove for All' and describes the key role that the council plays, through the provision and delivery of services, that are essential to everyday life. The Council Plan was adopted by Council on 20 July 2023.
- 1.2 This refresh provides an update of what has been delivered so far and sets out our areas of focus going forward, building on our four priority outcomes. The refresh has been informed by resident, stakeholder and staff engagement, and reflects the recommendations of our recent Local Government Association (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge. It forms our action plan in response to the Peer Challenge.
- 1.3 The Council Plan drives business planning for the council, with detailed delivery plans set out in the Corporate Leadership Plan and service plans. Progress is monitored through the council's performance framework and performance is regularly reported to Cabinet.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Cabinet recommends the updated Council Plan refresh at Appendix 1 to full Council for approval.
- 2.2 Cabinet notes the achievements made since the Council Plan was adopted in July 2023 as set out in Appendix 2.
- 2.3 Cabinet notes the progress made in relation to delivering the Council Plan in 2024/25 as detailed in Appendix 3.

- 2.4 Cabinet notes the recommendations in the Corporate Peer Challenge at Appendix 4 and the response to these in the Council Plan Refresh and agrees a future report on progress to be brought to a future Cabinet meeting, as part of the quarterly performance update.
- 2.5 Cabinet delegates to the Head of Cabinet Office, following consultation with the Leader, the authority to make changes to the design and layout of the documents before publication on the Council's website.

3. Context and background information

- 3.1 The Council Plan is the council's overarching strategic document and outlines our vision, priorities, and the outcomes which we aim to deliver. The Council Plan 2023-2027 was adopted in July 2023. The progress made to date towards the delivery of the Council Plan is evidenced in the performance report as set out in Appendix 3.
- 3.2 To achieve 'A better Brighton & Hove for all', the council plan sets out four priority outcomes. The updated plan reaffirms our commitment to delivering:
1. A city to be proud of
 2. A fair and inclusive city
 3. A healthy city where people thrive
 4. A responsive council with well-run services
- 3.3 The refreshed Council Plan also responds to the recommendations the council received through the Corporate Peer Challenge, which we undertook between 1st and 4th April 2025. LGA Corporate Peer Challenges are a highly valued improvement and assurance tool delivered by the sector. A team of 7 experienced elected Member and Officer peers were on site across the 4 days providing robust, strategic and credible challenge and support. The peer team spoke to more than 170 people including a range of council staff together with Members and external stakeholders.
- 3.4 The outcome of the Corporate Peer Challenge can be found in the report at Appendix 4. The key recommendations have been incorporated into the refresh of the Council Plan and the delivery of the actions will be monitored and tracked via the Corporate Leadership Plan. There will be a progress review conducted by the LGA on progress against these recommendations.
- 3.5 The Corporate Peer Challenge noted areas where the council is performing well, including:
- Staff commitment, professionalism and positive attitude
 - Strong political and officer leadership
 - Positive, values-driven culture rooted in openness, collaboration, and continuous improvement
 - Positive and respectful relationships between elected Members and Officers
 - Outstanding children's services
 - Place leadership and high-quality public realm improvements, with a visible impact in the Council's regeneration and infrastructure projects
 - National exemplar in equality, diversity, and inclusion

- Transformation efforts within Environmental Services showing early improvements
- 3.6 The key recommendations the Corporate Peer Challenge made were:
- Develop a robust and comprehensive financial strategy to deliver savings and ensure long term financial resilience
 - Develop a shared vision with all tiers of local government across Sussex on devolution and local government reorganisation
 - Continue cultural transformation within Environmental Services
 - Drive culture change across the organisation towards being a learning organisation – communication, leadership and staff engagement
 - Operationalise the learning organisation aspiration
 - Improve the council housing service
 - Accelerate efforts to mitigate homelessness-related financial pressures
 - Consider if further work is needed to ensure opposition parties do not feel excluded from the decision-making process through their inclusion more fully in the overview and scrutiny process

4. Analysis and consideration of alternative options

- 4.1 We are required to publish the Corporate Peer Challenge report by 14 July. Failure to do so would not be compliant with the terms of the challenge set out by the LGA and would pose reputational risk to the council.
- 4.2 The Council Plan has been refreshed to reflect the significant events that have taken place since it was adopted in July 2023, including the successful application to the Devolution Priority Programme, the linked invitation from government to take part in local government reform and the first Corporate Peer Challenge for Brighton & Hove in eight years. It also provides an opportunity for all council areas to review and update priorities moving forward, in alignment with the council's financial position.

5. Community engagement and consultation

- 5.1 The refresh of the Council Plan reflects feedback from residents and stakeholders that we've received through consultation and engagement since July 2023. This includes consultation on strategies such as our housing strategy, Economic Plan, City Plan and collected data via the Health Counts survey.
- 5.2 The Council held two events in December 2024 and January 2025, for residents to discuss the council's financial situation and share their views on how to balance the council's budget. This coincided with the launch of a budget simulator tool, which gave residents the opportunity to tell us which services matter most to them, which services they would protect and where they would choose to reduce funding.
- 5.3 The council continuously engages with residents and other stakeholders on our services, including through standing consultation groups such as our

tenant and leaseholder forums, the older people's forum and the youth council. We regularly hold public events and meetings to inform and enable individuals and groups to ask questions or have their say.

- 5.4 Our new digital engagement platform, Your Voice, offers another channel for people to participate. Since launching in March 2024, 58 digital engagement projects have been conducted through Your Voice on proposals, plans and consultations, for people to share their views, with an additional 8 currently live. It also provides an opportunity for the council to reach out to participants to share updates, events or results.
- 5.5 Before the launch of the Your Voice platform, from the introduction of the Council Plan in July 2023 to April 2024, we conducted 44 engagements projects.
- 5.6 Feedback from our recent Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge and their key recommendations has informed the Council Plan refresh. The peer team met and spoke to over 170 people during the four days they were on site in April and provided us with valuable insights to incorporate.

6 Financial implications

The Corporate Peer Challenge was clear that the council needs to develop a robust and comprehensive financial strategy that delivers both the necessary savings and the longer-term financial resilience across all funding streams and that this work must be progressed at pace. It is therefore imperative that the council plan delivery is aligned to the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and that these are continually reviewed together, to ensure we have the financial resources to deliver on the commitments being made in the Council Plan.

Name of finance officer consulted: John Hooton Date consulted: 07/07/25

7. Legal implications

The Council has a Best Value duty under the Local Government Act 1989 and the prioritisation and policy direction set out in the Council Plan will support the Council to meet this duty. The council's constitution provides that formal approval of the council plan is a matter reserved to full Council.

Name of lawyer consulted: Elizabeth Culbert Date consulted 04/07/25

8. Risk implications

There is a risk that the council's financial position will mean there is not enough resource in future to deliver everything committed to in the Council Plan. This will need to be reviewed as the MTFS develops.

The Council is currently undergoing significant change, brought about by the opportunities of devolution and local government reform (LGR). The Council

Plan should be viewed in this context and will need to be reviewed as options are developed for LGR.

9. Equalities implications

- 9.1 The council is subject to the general equality duty set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. This duty covers the following protected characteristics: age, gender, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, and sexual orientation.
- 9.2 In delivering the council plan the council must have due regard to the need to:
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
 - Advance equality of opportunity between different groups
 - Foster good relations between different groups
- 9.3 Given the breadth of the plan and the complexity of relevant protected characteristics and their intersections it is not possible to analyse all the impacts of the plan in relation to legally protected characteristics. However, the council's legal duties (Equality Act 2010) have shaped the development of the plan and inform its content, in relation to eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity, and fostering good relations.
- 9.4 Specific initiatives set out in the plan may require an Equalities Impact Assessment as part of the council's decision-making process. Areas of investment identified in the plan, as well as other decisions relating to implementation of the plan, will require Equality Impact Assessment as proposals are brought forward to relevant cabinet meetings or full council.

10. Sustainability implications

- 10.1 Sustainability implications are set out across the plan with measures to increase sustainability in the chapter 'An accessible, clean and sustainable city'. A sustainability impact assessment will be conducted as specific initiatives are taken forward.

11. Other Implications

Social Value and procurement implications

- 11.1 There are no direct social value or procurement implications arising from this report. Social value and procurement implications are considered in the context of the Council Plan in the sections 'Investing in our city' and 'A responsive council, with well-run services.'

Crime & disorder implications

- 11.2 Crime and disorder implications are considered in the section 'A city where people feel safe and welcome'. Other measures in the plan will have a direct

impact on reducing crime and disorder, for example, tackling the cost-of living crisis and addressing educational disadvantage.

Public health implications

- 11.3 Public health implications have been considered throughout the plan, including in the section 'Living and ageing well' as well as in other parts of the document. Other measures in the plan will have a direct impact on improving health and reducing health inequalities, for example, improving air quality, increasing cycling and walking and improving access to green spaces.

12. Conclusion

- 12.1 The Council Plan sets out the strategic vision for the council and articulates the priorities and outcomes we are focused on to our residents, staff, partners, trade unions and other stakeholders. It also enables core planning for services to deliver for the city. The refresh responds to the recommendations of our recent Corporate Peer Challenge to ensure we action and monitor progress on areas identified for improvement.

Supporting Documentation

1. Appendices

1. The Council Plan refresh 2023-2027
2. The Council Plan achievements (since July 2023)
3. The annual performance update report
4. The Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge final report