

South Lakeland District Council
Council
Tuesday, 17 December 2019
Council Plan and Biodiversity Policy

Portfolio:	Deputy Leader of the Council
Report from:	Director of Strategy, Innovation and Resources
Report Author:	Dan Hudson – Strategy Lead Specialist
Wards:	(All Wards);
Forward Plan:	On Forward Plan published 29th October 2019

1.0 Expected Outcome

- 1.1 The Council Plan sets out a vision, underpinned by four priorities that will guide how we work together with partners to make South Lakeland the best place to live, work and explore. The plan will guide the Council as it leads and influences in the places that matter and focuses resource where it is most effective. It provides a consistent basis for the plans, strategies, projects and decisions of the Council as Customer Connect is implemented.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 It is recommended that Council:

- (1) adopt the updated Council Plan 2020-2025 (Appendix 1) as part of the Council's Policy Framework; and**
- (2) adopt the Biodiversity Policy (Appendix 4) as part of the Council's Policy Framework and that consequent changes be made to the Policy Framework list within the Constitution.**

3.0 Background and Proposals

3.1 *Council Plan*

- 3.1 The Council Plan sets out the Council's vision and priorities. It is part of a suite of corporate documents and links closely with the Medium Term Financial Plan. These documents form part of the Council's Policy Framework and underpin the Council's approach to governance and community leadership.
- 3.2 The Council Plan is the Council's most important strategic document. It sets out the Council's long term vision and direction, provides strategic direction for other plans and strategies, underpins our influencing activity with Government and partners, enables activity to be focused on strategic objectives and provides a consistent basis for the prioritisation of resources, our commissioning and performance management frameworks and the roll-out of the new way of working under Customer Connect. It provides a concise statement of who we are and what we are about that is accessible to members, Council staff, partners and communities.

- 3.3 The current Council Plan was for the period 2019 to 2024, updated annually. The plan was substantially revised last year to be ready for the rollout of Customer Connect and has a long term strategic focus. As a result, only minor changes are proposed in this iteration of the plan. The plan has been revised and updated to run from 2020 to 2025. The revised plan is attached as Appendix 1. A number of minor changes are proposed and these are highlighted in yellow. The most important changes are additional updated text on working across boundaries reflecting progress on the Lancaster and South Cumbria Economic Region and additional emphasis on the Climate Change emergency and our response to the Climate emergency.
- 3.4 The revised plan retains the vision of “Working together to make South Lakeland the best place to live, work and explore”. Whilst South Lakeland is already a very good place to live, work and explore in many ways for many people, there are areas where we need to do more and the plan identifies four priority areas where activity needs to be focussed to achieve the vision. These are;
- Working Across Boundaries to deliver Sustainable Growth;
This means working with our partners to secure the investment, growth and infrastructure that will deliver jobs and maintain and enhance quality of life across the sub-region across the District, across the Morecambe Bay area and beyond. It also involves promoting both the District and the wider area as a centre of culture and creative industries.
 - Creating Balanced Communities;
This means addressing the challenges posed by our shrinking workforce and ageing population. It means retaining young people, attracting economically active people and young families and ensuring that housing, services and infrastructure meet the needs of older people. It also means promoting localism and helping communities to help themselves.
 - Reducing Inequalities;
Whilst many of South Lakeland’s residents enjoy a high standard of living and a good quality of life, action is needed to address inequalities. This means building financial resilience and addressing poverty, preventing homelessness and supporting vulnerable people, addressing inequalities in access to housing, addressing issues such as accessibility to people with disabilities and working through the Cumbria Joint Public Health Strategy to improve health outcomes and reduce health inequalities;
 - Responding to Climate Change and enhancing Biodiversity;
The Council declared a Climate Emergency in early 2019. A carbon reduction target is being developed, a comprehensive action plan for carbon reduction is being implemented. The Council Plan sets the strategic direction for this work and also references the important parallel area of biodiversity which will be considered later in the report.
- 3.5 The traditional subject priorities of housing and communities, health and environment and economy and culture are retained and under the new ways of working, services will work across these traditional priorities to deliver these cross cutting themes.
- 3.6 The plan also includes a statement of our values and sets out, in broad terms that following the transformation of Customer Connect, our customers, partners, employees and Councillors can expect us to be a Council which, as a forward thinking, innovative council, aims to inspire and empower our communities to thrive by delivering excellent value-for-money, services, playing a leadership role and

influencing others and considering the social, economic and environmental value of everything we do.

- 3.7 The plan will be underpinned by a comprehensive performance management framework which sets out a comprehensive range of outcomes and measures performance against these.
- 3.8 It is important to note that the Council Plan is a broad, strategic document which conveys vision, direction and strategic priorities. It is not intended to be a complete catalogue of everything the Council proposes to do over the next five years. These strategic priorities inform a vast range of projects, plans and strategies in place or progressing. These include the Local Plan, plans related to housing, economic development, health and wellbeing, climate change and financial resilience.

Biodiversity

- 3.9 Biodiversity is the variety and variability of life on earth at all levels. It is often measured through 'species richness'. The Council made the following declaration on July 23rd....

This Council notes in the recent report from the UN intergovernmental panel on biodiversity and ecosystem services. The report outlines the deterioration in biodiversity globally and the serious consequences of a further decline in biodiversity.

This Council further notes the UK government's failure to achieve agreed targets on biodiversity (the Aichi targets). Council therefore

- 1. Calls on the government to urgently take action to achieve the Aichi targets;*
- 2. Commits to a review of how this Council's activities can ensure biodiversity protection while at the same time delivering services, housing and climate change protection to the residents of the district; and*
- 3. Calls on our local authorities in the county to jointly address the highly serious issue of the future deterioration in biodiversity*

- 3.10 To address this, the scope of the Green Team has been widened to address the biodiversity. Climate change is a threat to many species, habitats and interactions between them both globally and locally. Conversely, thriving habitats, and woodland and wetlands in particular, are critical 'carbon sinks' which absorb and sequester carbon.
- 3:11 Many biodiversity related issues have arisen out of the Climate Change roadshows. Much is already being done. The principle of biodiversity net gain is enshrined in our new planning policies, we are engaged in large scale tree planting. We are increasingly managing our parks and open spaces to maximise biodiversity, changing mowing regimes to promote more diverse and species rich swards and working with community groups and volunteers to plant wildflowers in our parks and open spaces. Together with the County Council, we are investigating the scope for approaches to grass verge management to improve diversity.
- 3.12 However, as a starting point, a corporate policy on Biodiversity has been drafted (Appendix 4). This seeks to maximise the ways in which the Council can use its direct and indirect influence to ensure that the impact of human activity within South Lakeland on biodiversity is as positive as it can be.

4.0 Consultation

- 4.1 The Council Plan has been developed following meetings held with Cabinet Members and Officers. The Council Plan was considered by Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 25th October 2019. O&S requested that the draft plan contain a reference to transport and this has been implemented. O&S considered the draft

Biodiversity policy on 16th August 2019. Cabinet considered the Council Plan and Biodiversity policy on 27th November and recommended that both be adopted.

- 4.2 In development of the Council Plan the Council's existing priorities and activities have been reviewed. An assessment of the challenges facing South Lakeland and the views of residents, councillors, staff and other interested parties have been taken into account.

5.0 Alternative Options

- 5.1 The alternative option is not to approve the Council Plan. This is not recommended as the strategy sets the visions, values and delivery as the key strategy of the Council. Not recommending the approval of the plan would reduce the likelihood of the Council's ambitions being delivered. Similarly if the Biodiversity policy is not adopted, an important opportunity to focus on biodiversity will be lost.

6.0 Links to Council Priorities

- 6.1 The Council Plan is the key strategic document for the organisation. It sets out the Council priorities and is linked to all key strategies, including the Medium Term Financial Plan, Workforce Plan and Performance and Service Plans.

7.0 Implications

Financial, Resources and Procurement

- 7.1 The budget process is running alongside the development of the Council Plan and while the Council Plan represents the key strategic vision taken by the Council, the Medium Term Financial Plan details the Council's financial position.

Human Resources

- 7.2 The Customer Connect Programme sets out the organisational design, skills, knowledge and support that is needed to deliver the ambitions and priorities set out in the Council Plan

Legal

- 7.3 There are no legal implications to raise at this stage

Health, Social, Economic and Environmental

- 7.4 A Health, Social, Economic and Environmental Impact Assessment of the Council Plan is attached at Appendix 2. A Health, Social, Economic and Environmental Impact Assessment of the Biodiversity Policy is attached at Appendix 5.
- 7.5 Assessments will be carried out of the health, social, economic and environmental impact of individual projects linked to the Council Plan and Biodiversity Policy.

Equality and Diversity

- 7.6 An Equality Impact Analysis of the Council Plan is attached at Appendix 3. An Equality Impact Analysis of the Biodiversity Policy is attached at Appendix 6
- 7.8 Assessments will be carried out of the impact of individual projects linked to the Council Plan in respect of equality, diversity and inclusion.

Risk

Risk	Consequence	Controls required
The Council Plan is not adopted by the Council	Compromise the delivery of the priorities, service planning and performance monitoring. The Council	Ensure significant engagement and consultation has been achieved

Risk	Consequence	Controls required
	does not have an up to date basis for prioritisation and performance management	
The Biodiversity policy is not adopted by the Council	Delivery of Council plan objectives on biodiversity will be unco-ordinated	Ensure that biodiversity forms part of the work of the green team;
Actions by partner organisations, necessary to deliver the Council Plan and Biodiversity policy are not forthcoming	Delivery will not match expectation	Close engagement and joint working with critical delivery partners
There are insufficient resources to enable delivery of the Council Plan and biodiversity policy.	Priorities and objectives are not met	Ensure appropriate resources are available and account had of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan

Contact Officers

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Appendices Attached to this Report

Appendix No.	Name of Appendix
1	Draft Council Plan
2	Council Plan - Health, Social, Economic and Environmental Impact Assessment
3	Council Plan - Equalities Impact Assessment
4	Draft Biodiversity Policy
5	Biodiversity Policy - Health, Social, Economic and Environmental Impact Assessment
6	Biodiversity Policy - Equalities Impact Assessment

Background Documents Available

Tracking Information

Signed off by	Date sent
Legal Services	04/11/2019
Section 151 Officer	06/11/2019
Monitoring Officer	01/11/2019
CMT	08/11/2019

Circulated to	Date sent
Lead Specialist	N/A
Human Resources Lead Specialist	04/11/2019
Communications Team	04/11/2019

Circulated to	Date sent
Leader	08/11/2019
Committee Chairman	N/A
Portfolio Holder	31/10/2019
Ward Councillor(s)	N/A
Committee	N/A
Executive (Cabinet)	27/11/2019
Council	17/12/2019