

**Report title: 2025/26 Council Plan**

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Cabinet</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>11 February 2025</b>
<b>Cabinet Member</b> (if applicable)	<b>Cllr Carole Pattison, Leader of the Council</b>
<b>Key Decision Eligible for Call In</b>	<b>Yes Yes</b>
<p><b>Purpose of Report</b>          Our 2025/26 Council Plan (provided at <b>Appendix A</b>) sets out our ongoing commitment to our long-term vision and shared outcomes and council priorities and areas of focus for the 2025/26 financial year, supported by the budget. As such, it has been provided for approval alongside the 2025/26 annual budget.</p> <p>Cabinet is asked to consider the contents of the plan and recommend adoption of the Council Plan (subject to any further changes) at Council on 5 March 2025.</p>	
<p><b>Recommendations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For Cabinet to consider the contents of the Council Plan, as presented at <b>Appendix A of this report</b>.</li> <li>• For Cabinet to note the comments from Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, as provided in <b>section 5</b> of this report, and how these are reflected in the draft Council Plan.</li> <li>• For Cabinet to consider the results of the public budget engagement, provided at <b>Appendix L</b> of the 2025/26 annual budget report, and note how these are reflected in the draft Council Plan.</li> <li>• For Cabinet to recommend adoption of the Council Plan (subject to any further changes) at Council on 5 March 2025.</li> </ul> <p><b>Reasons for Recommendations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Council Plan is included in the Policy Framework for the Council, and as such must be approved by Council to become adopted as part of that framework.</li> <li>• The Council Plan sets the overarching strategic direction for the services and activities relating to the business of the Council, across all directorates and service delivery areas. As such, it is an important document providing strategic direction to all other plans, activities and services delivered by the Council.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Resource Implication:</b> The Council Plan sets out the strategic framework for the Council's budget and is to be considered alongside the Council's budget for decision at Council in March 2025.</p>	
<b>Date signed off by <u>Executive Director</u> &amp; name</b>	Rachel Spencer-Henshall – Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director for Public Health and Corporate Resources

<p><b>Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Finance?</b></p>	<p>30/1/2025 Kevin Mulvaney 31/1/2025</p>
<p><b>Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Legal and Commissioning (Monitoring Officer)?</b></p>	<p>Samantha Lawton 30/1/2025</p>

**Electoral wards affected:** All

**Ward councillors consulted:** Not applicable

**Public or private:** Public

**Has GDPR been considered?** No personal data is included in this report.

## 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Council Plan sets the overarching strategic direction for the services and activities relating to the business of the Council and is aligned to the setting of our annual budget.
- 1.2 The Council Plan and the budget are aligned, because the Council Plan sets out our strategic priorities, and the budget sets out how resources have been aligned to deliver upon those priorities. As such, the Council Plan, attached at **Appendix A** covers the 2025/26 financial year.
- 1.3 The Council Plan retains and reasserts the longer-term cross-directorate principles which we work alongside our partners to achieve, including our vision, our shared outcomes, and our key partnership strategies.
- 1.4 The Council Plan also retains existing internal principles and ways of working, including our approach (working alongside people, partners and in our places), and our People Strategy, and associated organisational values and supporting behaviours (values of Kindness, Inclusion and Pride).
- 1.5 The 2025/26 Council Plan includes several changes setting out the direction and priorities of the Council for the 25/26 financial year, including four priorities, and associated 'areas of focus' which set out some of the key areas of work we are undertaking to progress each priority in the 25/26 financial year.

## 2. Information required to take a decision

- 2.1 The Council Plan sets the overarching strategic direction for the services and activities relating to the business of the council.
- 2.2 The plan is part of the Council's Policy Framework as set out in Article 4 of the council's constitution. As such, it is approved at Full Council.
- 2.3 The plan doesn't attempt to list all the council's services and programmes. It summarises the council's role alongside partners in delivering our vision and shared outcomes and sets out how the council is prioritising our activity in the current context with the resources available.

2.4 The plan is developed alongside the budget in line with our Annual Business Planning Cycle and will go to Full Council alongside the budget in March for decision. The timings align the Council Plan with the financial year and the setting of the budget, with the Council Plan setting out our strategic priorities for the forthcoming financial year, and the budget setting out how resources have been aligned to deliver upon those priorities.

## 2.5 **Key Features of the Council Plan retained from previous versions**

The 2025/26 Council Plan retains and reasserts a number of long-term cross-directorate principles, which we have been working to for several years alongside partners across the district. Most of these can only be delivered in partnership. These include:

- **Vision** - Our vision for Kirklees is “to be a district that combines a strong, sustainable economy with a great quality of life - leading to thriving communities, growing businesses, high prosperity and low inequality where people enjoy better health throughout their lives.”
- **Shared Outcomes** – These eight outcomes describe the impact the council and our partners are looking to have. These are summarised as: Healthy and Well, Best Start, Independence, Aspire and Achieve, Sustainable Economy, Shaped by People, Safe and Cohesive, and Clean and Green. It also includes an outcome we have chosen for ourselves: a commitment to be ‘Efficient and Effective’.
- **Our Key Partnership Strategies:** Environment Strategy, Inclusive Economy Strategy, Health and Wellbeing Strategy, and the Inclusive Communities Framework.
- **Approach** - How working with People, Partners and in our Places is central to the way that we do things.
- **Values and Behaviours** - Our People Strategy, and values of ‘Kindness, Inclusion and Pride’, and supporting behaviours.

## 2.6 **Key Features of the Plan which are new for 2025/26**

The 2025/26 Council Plan includes several changes setting out the direction and priorities of the Council for the 25/26 financial year. These include:

Four strategic priorities:

1. **Getting the basics right** – a balanced budget and a modern organisation
2. **Protecting the vulnerable and achieving inclusion**
3. **Thriving people and communities** – now and over the longer-term
4. **Local economic growth** – working with regional and national partners

Underneath each of the four broad priorities, further details cover:

- What the priority means
- Why it is important
- Areas of focus, setting out some of the key areas of work we are undertaking to progress the priority in the 25/26 financial year.

## 2.7 **Key Features of the Plan which apply over the medium to long-term**

The 2025/26 version of the Council Plan sets out the direction of key priorities for the Council for the forthcoming financial year, however there are several elements to the plan which go beyond this timeframe and are relevant across both medium and longer-term timescales. These key areas of focus in the Plan have been highlighted here:

### **Getting the basics right – a balanced budget and modern organisation**

- Build on our performance on refuse collection
- Deliver an effective road network.
- Enable our members to carry out their roles effectively and building officer awareness and confidence when supporting members.
- Build on the progress to design and deliver improvements in customer access.
- Deliver a programme of work to ensure managers are confident in managing budgets, performance, contracts and staff in their service.
- Develop services further through benchmarking, best practice and research.
- Develop and deliver an action plan setting out how we will act on the recommendations provided by the Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge in November 2024
- Focus on bringing in external funding for projects in Kirklees through working more collaboratively with partners.

### **Protecting the vulnerable and achieving inclusion:**

- Implement the 'Big Plan' – our offer to children and families with special educational needs and disabilities
- Work to ensure we have the right blend and availability of accommodation for people with social care needs
- Work with partners to enable children in care and care leavers to access the services they need
- Promote inclusion through workforce planning
- Prevent homelessness and rough sleeping

### **Thriving people and communities – now and over the longer-term**

- Work with our whole family of schools and educational settings to develop longer term plans for our operational arrangements and relationships.
- Build on our children's services continuous improvement plan and success.
- Work with businesses and community groups to build safe, clean and green places
- Ensure people are living in homes that are modern, safe and warm.
- Raise awareness of the Environment Strategy.
- Work closely with ward councillors as local place-leaders, enabling place-based responses to the unique challenges and opportunities of each place.
- Continue to deliver the community sector infrastructure contract with Third Sector Leaders.

### **Local economic growth, working with regional and national partners**

- Progress phase 1 of the Cultural Heart development in Huddersfield.
- Progress the Blueprint for regeneration in Dewsbury.
- Make progress on smaller town regeneration plans across the district, including in Batley, Cleckheaton, Heckmondwike, Holmfirth and Marsden.

- Deliver on the next stages of the West Yorkshire Investment Zone, working with the West Yorkshire Combined Authority, Huddersfield University and Leeds and Bradford Councils.
- Work with local, regional and national partners across all sectors to promote investment in local places.
- Produce, consult on, and begin the delivery of the Kirklees Transport Strategy.
- Strengthen rail links within the district and beyond, working with the Government and other partners.
- Deliver priority improvements to our transport hubs, including bus stations in Huddersfield, Dewsbury and Heckmondwike.
- Work with local employers to develop workforce skills and support inclusive employment.
- Develop and deliver new employment programmes to support residents with long-term health conditions.
- Delivering a range of adult learning programmes in several community settings.
- Progress planning and development of key housing sites.
- Progress the refresh of the Local Plan in line with the revised National Planning Policy Framework.

### **3. Implications for the Council**

#### **3.1 Council Plan**

The new Council Plan (provided at **Appendix A** will replace the current version of the Council Plan (2024/25).

#### **3.2 Financial Implications**

The Council Plan provides the overarching strategic framework for the Budget, which sets out the resources available for delivering upon the priorities contained with the Council Plan.

#### **3.3 Legal Implications**

The Council Plan is included in the Policy Framework for the Council, as set out in Part 2, Article 4 of the Council's Constitution, and as such, it is the decision of Full Council whether to adopt any Council Plan.

#### **3.4 Other (e.g. Risk, Integrated Impact Assessment or Human Resources)**

Our Council Plan restates our commitment to our People Strategy, which sets out how we will achieve our shared outcomes with the support of healthy, motivated and flexible staff with the right skills, values and behaviours to work in partnership with people and places.

An Integrated Impact Assessment has been completed and is available on the Council website here: <https://www.kirklees.gov.uk/beta/delivering-services/integrated-impact-assessments>

### **4 Consultation**

The public consultation to support the 2025/26 annual budget was launched on the 11 December and ran up until the 15 January 2025. The purpose of the consultation is to

help the council understand what is most important to people and communities in Kirklees, and to inform the development of, and decision making related to, the council's 2025/26 annual budget and associated Council Plan. A summary of the feedback has been appended to the 2025/26 budget report at **Appendix L**.

The public budget consultation highlighted the council services which matter the most to respondents. These were: emptying bins and cleaning streets, highways maintenance and improvement, schools, and services to support vulnerable adults and children and families.

The priorities, and associated areas of focus in the Council Plan (attached at **Appendix A**) explicitly include priorities for improvement on areas which matter the most to respondents to the consultation, including waste services, highways improvements, schools and services to protect vulnerable adults, children and families.

Cabinet is asked to consider the results of the public budget engagement and note how these are reflected in the draft Council Plan.

## **5 Engagement**

The vision and shared outcomes are products of partner engagement. The shared outcomes indicators and measures and any updates are discussed and agreed at a partnership level with the Partnership Executive.

All four council directorates have been engaged in developing the areas of focus in the plan.

Leading Members have been updated on the ongoing development of the plan.

The Leader provided an initial overview of the Administration's thinking around new priorities at an OSMC session in September 2024. The priorities and areas of focus are further developments from that presentation and discussion.

On 17 January 2025, Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee considered the four priorities presented in the Plan, and suggestions for 'Areas of Focus'. Comments provided by members of the Committee were recorded as follows:

- That the intention to undertake an in-depth review of the Council Plan be noted and that it be recommended that it should more explicitly cover a longer timeframe than one year.
- That, in light of third sector partners and local community organisations being able to access external funding that is not available to the Council which could be used to help achieve Council objectives, it be recommended that the enablement approach be further strengthened to support them to take advantage of such funding opportunities.

The Committee also commented on the extent to which the green/environmental agenda was featured in the plan.

As a result of their feedback, we have incorporated the following amendments into the content of the Council Plan:

- Refined the area of focus on external funding, so it emphasises the importance of bringing external funding into our partnership working, especially with community organisations.
- Added a more explicit reference to the environment as an aspect of ‘place’ under ‘people, partners, place’.
- Added an additional ‘area of focus’ – to raise awareness of the Environment Strategy, engaging with partners and communities on our shared role in delivering its ambitions.

With reference to the recommendation about the plan being more explicit about covering a longer timeframe than one-year, key features of the plan which apply to a timeframe longer than the 25/26 financial year have been included in section 2.7 of this report. Additionally, timeframes will also be considered whilst undertaking a more in-depth review ahead of the 2026 Council Plan.

Cabinet is asked to note the comments from Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee and how these are reflected in the draft Council Plan as set out above.

## 6 Options

### 6.1 Options Considered

Cabinet may either choose to approve the plan as presented or indicate any amendments or changes they may wish to make.

Our recommendations to Cabinet are:

- For Cabinet to approve the contents of the Council Plan
- For Cabinet to note the comments from Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, as provided in **section 5** of this report, and how these are reflected in the draft Council Plan.
- For Cabinet to note the results of the public budget engagement, provided at **Appendix L** of the 2025/26 annual budget report, and note how this is reflected in the draft Council Plan.
- For Cabinet to recommend adoption of the Council Plan (subject to any further changes) at Council on 5 March 2025.

### 6.2 Reasons for recommended Option

- The Council Plan is included in the Policy Framework for the Council, and as such must be approved by Council to become adopted as part of that framework.
- The Council Plan sets the overarching strategic direction for the services and activities relating to the business of the Council, across all directorates and service delivery areas. As such, it is an important document providing strategic direction to all other plans, activities and services delivered by the Council.

## 7. Next steps and timelines

The 2025/26 Council Plan will be considered for adoption by Council on 5 March 2025.

If the Council Plan is adopted by Council, it will be published on the council website, replacing the current version of the Council Plan.

The Council Plan will then move into implementation and be used across all council directorates to guide and prioritise planning, and activities relating to the delivery of services. The plan, and the priorities and areas of focus within it, will also be communicated both internally and externally, to ensure wider awareness and engagement.

**8. Contact officer**

Stephen Bonnell, Head of Policy, Partnerships, and Corporate Planning  
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**9. Background Papers and History of Decisions**

The Council Plan for 2024/25, [approved by Council on 6 March 2024](#).

**10. Appendices**

Appendix A: 2025/26 Council Plan

**11. Service Director responsible**

Andy Simcox, Service Director Strategy and Innovation