
SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL PLAN 2022-2023

Report by Chief Executive

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

22 February 2022

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report seeks Council's approval of the 'Scottish Borders Council Plan 2022-2023'; in principle support of annual review of the Council Plan; and endorsement of a review of the Council's performance management approach.**
- 1.2 Scottish Borders Council agreed its present Corporate Plan in February 2018. Following Council approval of the Corporate Plan Refresh on 17 June 2021, the present report asks Council to agree the 'Scottish Borders Council Plan 1 April 2022-31 March 2023' set out in draft at Appendix A. The draft Plan consolidates and articulates the Council's strategic ambition beginning with the Corporate Plan 2018-2023 but incorporating strategic commitments made since 2018. In so doing, the draft Plan seeks both to provide a bridge from the existing Corporate Plan 2018-2023 to future Council Plans and to lay a template for those Council Plans in future.
- 1.3 To ensure that future Council Plans keep pace with the developing strategic context and member ambition, it is proposed, in principle, that Council support annual review of the Council Plan.
- 1.4 Furthermore, to ensure that the Council is effectively measuring strategic priorities which emerge from its Council Plan, Council is asked to endorse review of the Council's performance management approach.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **I recommend that Council approves:-**
 - a) The Scottish Borders Council Plan 1 April 2022-31 March 2023 at Appendix A;**
 - b) Development of a digital version of the Plan on the Council website, building on the desk top version presented in Appendix A;**
 - c) In principle, that the Council Plan should be reviewed and updated annually; and**
 - d) Review of the Council's performance management approach to ensure consistency with the Council Plan.**

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Scottish Borders Council agreed its present Corporate Plan in February 2018. As identified in the Refresh of the Corporate Plan approved by Council in the summer of 2021, many significant developments have taken place since 2018. These have a significant bearing on the Scottish Borders as a region and upon the strategic ambition of the Council and should inform the content of the strategic framework that is the substance of a 'council plan'. They include, among other things, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, agreement of the Scottish Borders Climate Change Route Map, and intimations of national policy intent, such as the establishment of a National Care Service.
- 3.2 In its approval of the Refresh of the Council Plan on 17 June 2021, Council agreed that revisiting of the Council Plan should be annual, and the first such review should align with Council's consideration of its Financial Plan 2022-23 to 2027-28.
- 3.3 The 'Scottish Borders Council Plan 1 April 2022-31 March 2023' is presented to Council today pursuant to Council's decision of 17 June 2021, and with the object of the annual consideration of the Council's Plan becoming embedded as established practice. The rationale for this 'established practice' is that the Council's Financial Plans are intended to deliver on the goals set out in the Council Plan. In short, the Financial Plans are the 'servant' of the Council Plan in which members set out their strategic ambition for the period ahead. Accordingly, the Financial Plans should be seen to emerge from the Council Plan, accepting the imperative of the Council continuing its careful management of financial sustainability to enable it to deliver on the Council Plan. It also follows that the cycle of developing a Council Plan should run concurrently with the development of the Council's Financial Plans. Furthermore, there is a strong read across between the draft Plan and the Council's Transformation Programme, reflecting the obvious relationship between the Council's priorities, and transformation objectives in securing the best outcomes organisationally and for the region.
- 3.4 In its Best Value Assurance Report of October 2019, the Accounts Commission, while endorsing the Council's 'steady progress as it continues to transform the way it delivers services', highlighted the Council's need to 'be more effective in evaluating, managing and reporting its performance, bringing greater clarity on where and how its services need to improve.' This is highly pertinent to the development of the Council Plan and, most especially, the question of how the Council strengthens the relationship between its strategic aspirations, improvement and delivery.
- 3.5 The development of a reinvigorated Council Plan presents the organisation with the perfect opportunity to realign its performance management approach, ensuring cohesive monitoring of the organisation's strategic outcomes. Manifestly, what the Council measures must reflect the priorities it has articulated in its Council Plan. This is addressed in the report recommendations.

Next Steps

- 3.6 The primary purpose of this report is to seek Council's approval of the draft Scottish Borders Council Plan 1 April 2022-31 March 2023. A broader purpose is set out in the 'foreword' to the Plan. The following points should be emphasised:
- a) The Plan seeks to set out the Council ambitions and priorities for the year ahead. It outlines, in draft, what the Council wants to achieve and how it intends to do it.
 - b) The Plan looks very different from Corporate Plans of the past. This is intentional, as we explain in the next paragraph, but the content is well established. It builds on our Corporate Plan for 2018-2023 and the Refresh of last summer, augmented by the Council's significant strategic commitments made since 2018. An accurate picture of the scale and breath of those commitments could not be given without reference, for example, to the South of Scotland Regional Economic Strategy, Scottish Borders Anti-Poverty Strategy Action Plan or the Scottish Borders Climate Change Route Map. To be truly responsive to a strategic context which evolves rapidly, it is clear that the Plan should be annually revisited. Ultimately, of course, whether future councils revisit the Council Plan on an annual basis will be a matter for them, but, as a measure of good practice, Council is asked to support annual review of the Council Plan as a matter of principle. Furthermore, if, as noted, the Council Plan is intended to guide the Council's Financial Plans, then the development of the Council Plans must accompany and shape the development of the Financial Plans. In light of this, it is considered desirable that the Council Plan is typically presented or re-presented when the Council considers its Financial Plans.
 - c) The Plan aims to be short, simple and relatable. It is intended to be public-facing and must be accessible to the public – to whom the Council is accountable. At the same time, considerable effort has been made to ensure clarity around the actions the Council is taking or intends to take, so that it (and the public) can measure if those actions are having the outcomes intended. If they are not, the Council needs to change what it is doing. That is why the Council is also intending to review its performance management approach. If the Council Plan captures the Council's priorities, then self-evidently it is those priorities which the Council should be measuring and seeking to continuously improve.
 - d) Formulation of the new Council Plan provides a perfect opportunity to rethink how performance drives excellence, transparency and improvement. SBC is ambitious to establish a total performance management culture, based on the priorities of members reflected in the Council Plan. Subject to Council approval, the review process will be progressed to be reported back in conjunction with the development of the next Council Plan.
 - e) The keynote of the existing Corporate Plan remains the recognition that, if the Scottish Borders is to successfully meet future challenges and grasp future opportunities to transform, this requires everyone to play

their part, from the Council delivering services to volunteers supporting communities throughout the Scottish Borders; from the Council reducing its greenhouse gas emissions to residents seeking to reduce their waste and to put the right things in the right bins. While the emphasis of the 'new' Plan is on the Council's 'part' in 'improving the wellbeing of citizens within the Scottish Borders and making our region a more sustainable and better place to live, work in and to visit', the recognition that our communities, businesses and partners must play their 'part' remains a prerequisite of collective improvement and success.

- f) The Scottish Borders Council Plan 1 April 2022-31 March 2023, seeks both to provide a bridge from the existing Corporate Plan 2018-2022 to future Council Plans and to lay a template for those Council Plans in future. Following the Council Elections in May, the new Council will want to shape and develop the Plan. Officers are preparing for that. The Plan at Appendix A is intended to help support that process.
- g) Working through the Scottish Borders Place-Making Programme, it is intended further iterations of the Council Plan are enhanced by two developments:
- A transformed engagement and co-production with our communities of a shared ambition for the region;
 - A Plan that speaks to our 'Places' across the Scottish Borders by setting out the priorities for different communities, whether in Berwickshire, Cheviot, Eildon, Teviot & Liddesdale, or Tweeddale. In short, it is intended to include 'Area Chapters' within future iterations of the Council Plan, which seek to set out for each of the areas of the Scottish Borders clear ambition, action and outcomes in the same way that the draft at Appendix A seeks to do for the region as a whole.
- h) Subject to Council approval of the draft Council Plan, officers will proceed to develop a fully digital version of the Plan on the Council website, building on the desk top version presented in Appendix A.

4 IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Financial

Recognising that the draft Council Plan builds on our Corporate Plan for 2018-2023 and the significant strategic commitments made by the Council since 2018, there is strong correlation between the draft Plan and the Council's draft Financial Plans for 2022-2023 to 2027-2028. At the same time, any Council Plan is about more than pre-existing commitments. It also articulates ambition. In this regard, the Plan is not in itself an approval of each and every action which may flow from the Plan. Rather the Plan is an expression of the Council's strategic intent. Where that intent gives rise to financial implications not already expressly budgeted for, those financial implications will necessarily need to be reported to Council/the appropriate committee.

4.2 Risk and Mitigations

Highlighted by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Climate and Nature Emergency, and EU Exit, the strategic context in which the Council is operating has changed significantly since it agreed its Corporate Plan in 2018. To ensure that the Plan, which establishes the strategic ambition of the Council remains relevant and directs the Council's activities effectively, it needs to take account of such changes, and, to refresh the thinking and commitments in the light of those changes. This is what the proposed Council Plan at Appendix A seeks to address. By approving the principle of annual review of the Council Plan, Council will mitigate the risk of the Council Plan being out of date, or silent on the actions needed to address relevant strategic issues. Furthermore, endorsement of the review of the Council's performance management approach will ensure the development of a performance framework and performance indicators based upon member priorities articulated through the Council Plan.

4.3 Integrated Impact Assessment

An integrated Impact Assessment has been undertaken. The findings indicate that, whilst the Council Plan is relevant to both the Equality and Fairer Scotland Duty, there is no need for a full assessment to be undertaken. This is because the impact of the Plan is indirect rather than direct. It will impact and influence the Council's decision-making, policy approach and delivery more widely, but by setting the terms in which that decision-making, policy approach and delivery takes place. The specific plans and policies described in or which flow from the Council Plan will require IIAs.

4.4 Sustainable Development Goals

The draft Council Plan complements the Embedding Sustainable Development Report of 29 August 2019. The draft Plan is explicitly part of a journey aimed at embedding a culture in the Council which supports delivery of the UN SDGs 'as they relate to local government', in the context of the Council's remit and responsibilities. The goal is to embed values in the Council's decision-making, policy development and delivery which are complementary to the UN SDGs. It informs the 'values' of the Council Plan, and 'Our Outcomes' are strongly correlated with the UN SDGs as noted below:

Our Outcomes	UN SDGs
Clean, green future – we tackle climate change and we value, protect and enhance our local environment and nature, so that the Scottish Borders can be enjoyed by future generations	13 Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts 15 Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss
Fulfilling our potential - From child to adult, everyone in the Scottish	4 Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote

Borders has access to high quality education and the opportunities they need to fulfil their potential	lifelong learning opportunities for all potential
Strong inclusive economy, transport and infrastructure – built upon strong and effective physical and digital connections and infrastructure, the benefits of a productive and sustainable economy are widely shared, enabling us to fulfil our potential in the Scottish Borders and attract others to live, work and visit	1 End poverty in all its forms everywhere 8 Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all 9 Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation
Empowered, vibrant communities – the Scottish Borders has thriving, inclusive communities where people support each other and take responsibility for their local area	11 Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe resilient and sustainable
Good health and wellbeing – the people of the Scottish Borders have the opportunities and are supported to take control of their health and wellbeing, enjoying a high quality of life	3 Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages
Working together improving lives – working together, an effective and efficient Council delivers for its communities and the Scottish Borders	16 Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

4.5 **Climate Change**

A just transition to net zero is at the heart of the draft Council Plan, most directly in relation to the Clean Green Future Outcome, but it is also invested strongly in other outcomes such as in the ambition for resilient and sustainable communities in the Empowered Vibrant Communities Outcome, or the Strong Economy Outcome ambition to ‘Seize the economic opportunities of a just transition to net zero.’

4.6 **Rural Proofing**

The draft Council Plan has been developed with a strong focus on place, recognising the particular geography and demography of the Scottish Borders. It is a specific objective of the Plan to develop ‘community-led place plans across rural communities and towns.’ At the same time, the commitment to ‘enhanced participation and engagement’ will have a strongly positive effect in promoting inclusivity and thereby facilitating the participation of those people, businesses and stakeholders based in rural locations.

4.7 **Data Protection Impact Statement**

There are no personal data implications arising from the proposals contained in this report.

4.8 **Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation**

Not applicable.

5 CONSULTATION

5.1 The Executive Director (Finance & Regulatory), the Monitoring Officer/Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Service Director HR & Communications, the Clerk to the Council and Corporate Communications have been consulted and any comments received have been incorporated into the final report.

Approved by

Signature

Netta Meadows
Chief Executive

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Background Papers: Refresh of Scottish Borders Council Plan 2018-2023 Report 17 June 2021

Previous Minute Reference: Minute item 8 Scottish Borders Council 17 June 2021

Note – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. Michael Cook/Melanie Hermiston can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

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