
UPDATE ON THE COUNCIL PLAN AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

Report by Chief Executive

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

23 November 2023

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the development of a refreshed Council Plan from April 2024, and sets out how the Council's performance management process supports delivery of the Council Plan.**
- 1.2 In February 2023, Council approved the 'Scottish Borders Council Plan from April 2023'. The Council Plan articulates the Council's strategic ambitions for the year ahead, as well as a long-term vision for the Council. Performance against the Council Plan is reported to the Executive Committee on a Quarterly basis.
- 1.3 This report updates Elected Members on the development of the 'Council Plan from April 2024' and explains how the Council's performance management process supports delivery of the Council Plan.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 I recommend that the Council notes the update on the development of a refreshed Council Plan from April 2024, and the vital role of the Council's performance management process in supporting delivery of the Council Plan.**

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Scottish Borders Council agreed its present Council Plan in February 2023. The Plan followed a style and format first adopted in 2022, intended to provide the Council with an annually refreshed Plan that:
- a) is short, simple and relatable for the public, but SMART, meaning composed of actions which are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound;
 - b) sets the strategic framework for the Council and for the Council's Financial Plans and operates in sync with the Council's Budget Setting Process;
 - c) is informed by strong engagement with Elected Members, while being responsive to and reflective of the aspirations of the Scottish Borders' communities; and
 - d) is effectively linked with a Performance Management Framework and an embedded culture of continuous improvement.
- 3.2 This report provides an update on the development of the next iteration of the Council Plan from April 2024, and, as importantly, sets out how the Council's performance management process supports delivery of the Council Plan.

A. The Council Plan from April 2024

- 3.3 The development of the Council plan is influenced by a broad range of factors.
- Foundational to effective decision-making is relevant and good quality evidence. The Council's aim is for the plan to be rooted in the available data and evidence, highlighting the challenges and opportunities which the Scottish Borders currently faces and plotting an ambitious path to a positive future.
 - The plan must also reflect the strategic priorities of Elected Members, set within the local and national policy context.
 - The Council's determination to ensure the Plan is influenced by public and community aspirations and concerns is manifested in the Community Conversations which took place during the late summer and autumn 2023, and in the Council's commitment to Place-making.
 - Strategic investment decisions and decisions on funding priorities whether through the South of Scotland Regional Economic Strategy, Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal, City Region Deal and Regional Prosperity Fund, Shared Prosperity Funding, or other vehicles feature strongly in the projects which animate much of the Council Plan.
 - The foregoing factors all influence the Council's service planning process, establishing priorities and projects, while providing evidence and feedback on service delivery and setting the context for service planning and activity.
- 3.4 Figure 1 (below) illustrates these relationships. Metaphorically, the Council Plan is a river, fed by a series of a tributaries which charge and shape the course of the river culminating at the river mouth, which, simply, is the finalised Council Plan annually presented to Council on Budget Day in conjunction with the Council's Financial Plans.

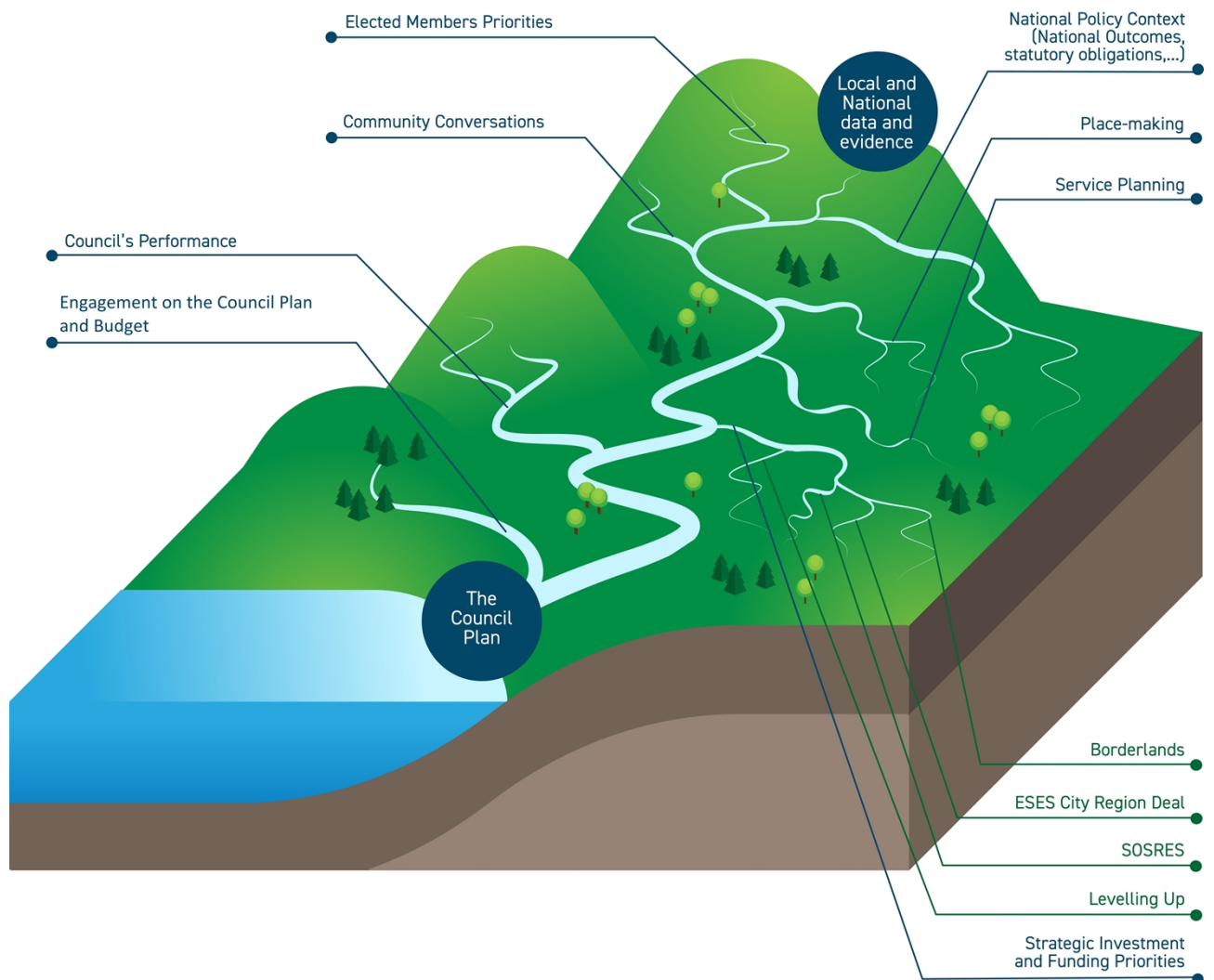


Figure 1 – What shapes our Plan

- 3.5 Drawing all of the above together is the Council’s performance management process. As explained in Section B of this report, regular monitoring of delivery against the Council Plan verifies whether the Council is succeeding in doing what it said it was going to do in the Council Plan. Where it is not, it must change what it is doing. This influences delivery against the Council Plan across the course of the year and has a critical bearing on shaping the next iteration of the Council Plan when it is refreshed annually.
- 3.6 Currently, officers are working through the factors set out in paragraph 3.3 and Figure 1 with a view to formulating a draft Council Plan from April 2024. Elected Members will continue to be consulted on the development of the Plan through the remainder of 2023 and into 2024.
- 3.7 Consistent with the aims for the Council Plan described in para 3.1, the Council Plan from April 2024 will maintain the same priority themes:
- Clean Green Future
 - Fulfilling Our Potential
 - Strong Inclusive Economy, Transport, and Infrastructure
 - Empowered Vibrant Communities

- Good Health and Wellbeing
 - Working Together, Improving Lives
- ...while also seeking to strengthen:
- The relationship to the Council's Financial Planning process, reflecting that a key function of the Council's Financial Planning process is resourcing the delivery of the Council Plan;
 - Community influence within the Plan through the Community Conversations, recognising that understanding public and community needs is essential to the development of effective plans and solutions; and
 - Delivery of the Council Plan by continuing to develop consistent and effective service planning, ensuring that service plans describe how each of the Council's directorates will help deliver the Council Plan.

3.8 The final binding element of the Council Plan process, as noted, is verifying whether what the Council says it will do is being done. This is the focus of the next section, explaining how the Council's approach to performance management is integral to delivering against the Council Plan. Elected Members have an essential role in oversight of this delivery.

B. Performance Management of Council Plan Delivery

3.9 Over the last 2 years, the Council has not only been developing its approach to its Council Plan. It has also been refining and developing its performance management approach. In general terms, performance management is about using data to inform action that will improve outcomes for people. Performance management is key to the Council taking responsibility for its own performance and enabling Elected Members and the public to hold the Council to account, ensuring that the Council responds to local needs and that public money is being spent wisely. If the Council does not measure results, it cannot differentiate positive progress from problematic progress. Understanding this difference is vital. Positive progress must be highlighted so that the Council can build on it: problematic progress must be highlighted so that the Council can correct and learn from it. Importantly, if the Council can demonstrate good results, it can gain public support for bringing about change.

3.10 To ensure that the Council is delivering against its Council Plan outcomes, Elected Members are updated on our performance on a quarterly basis, via the 'Quarterly Performance Reports' presented to the Executive Committee. These reports provide an evidence base and data-driven overview of the Council's delivery and ensure that Elected Members have oversight of whether and how effectively SBC is delivering its strategic outcomes. The performance reports are also key in shaping the development of future Council Plans and Financial Plans in that they can highlight gaps in delivery.

3.11 The Performance reports are comprised of two main sections. The first focuses on the milestones highlighted within the Council Plan, and therefore reflects the change projects which the Council is currently undertaking. The second focuses on Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and reflect performance for the Council's day-to-day activities, as highlighted in the 'Delivering for the Borders' section of the plan.

3.12 Data for each performance report is gathered at the end of each financial quarter and then presented to the Council's Executive Committee before the end of the following quarter. The Quarter 1 Performance Report was taken to Executive Committee on 12 September 2023 and can be seen [here](#). The Quarter 2 Performance report is scheduled to be taken to Executive Committee on 5 December 2023. A dashboard showing the performance of all indicators over time is also published and can be found on the Council's Performance pages [here](#).

4 IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Financial

There are no direct financial implications associated with this report.

4.2 Risk and Mitigations

- a) Having a robust plan which sets out what the Council wants to achieve and how the Council intends to do it is essential, not only for us as a council, but for Scottish Borders residents too. This is the fundamental purpose of the Council Plan. At the same time, Councillors are required to provide strategic leadership and oversight of the local authority. This involves setting strategy and policy, scrutinising overall performance against strategic aims, and making major, complex decisions that concern the Council as a whole. Drawing together the necessity of a Council Plan and the core role of Elected Members, it is essential that the latter are engaged in and shape the Council's principal strategic plan in the form of the Council Plan, as well as providing oversight of delivery against that Plan. The purpose of the present report is to ensure that Elected Members are properly informed with respect to the development of the refreshed Council Plan from April 2024, and in relation to performance management oversight of the Council Plan and Elected Members' critical role within that process.
- b) The plan is reviewed and updated annually to make sure it continues to reflect the Council's ambitions and priorities, and to report on our progress in delivering the commitments set out in the plan. The present report describes and supports the process of annual update of the Council Plan.

4.3 Integrated Impact Assessment

As this report does not propose a new policy, strategy, or project but rather updates Elected Members on existing processes, completion of an Integrated Impact Assessment was not necessary. It should, however, be noted that an IIA was completed regarding the current Council Plan, and will be completed for the upcoming plan, to be presented to Council in February.

4.4 Sustainable Development Goals

This is an update report and does not in itself promote delivery of the UN SDGs. However, the Council Planning process and related performance management process are 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, pursuant to the Embedding Sustainable Development Report of 29 August 2019. Thus, the relationship of the Council Plan to the UN SDGs will be addressed in the refreshed Council Plan and the covering report presented to Council in February 2024.

4.5 Climate Change

This is an update report and does not in itself promote Climate Action. However, a just transition to net zero is at the heart of the Council Planning process, most directly in relation to the Clean Green Future Outcome. It is also invested strongly in other outcomes, such as in the ambition for resilient and sustainable communities in the Empowered Vibrant Communities Outcome, and the Strong Economy Outcome ambition to 'seize the economic opportunities of a just transition to net zero'. Thus, the relationship of the Council Plan to Climate Action will be addressed in the Council Plan and the covering report presented to Council in February 2024.

4.6 Rural Proofing

This is an update report and does not in itself promote Rural Proofing. However, the Council Planning process has a strong focus on place, recognising the particular geography and demography of the Scottish Borders. It is a specific objective of the present Plan to develop 'community-led place plans across rural communities and towns' and 'enhanced participation and engagement' aimed at promoting inclusivity and the participation of those people, businesses and stakeholders based in rural locations. It is anticipated that Place-making and Rural Proofing objectives will feature strongly within the refreshed Council Plan presented to Council in February 2024.

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

There are no changes to the Scheme of Administration arising from this report.

5 CONSULTATION

5.1 The Director (Finance & Procurement), the Director (Corporate Governance), the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Director (People Performance & Change), the Clerk to the Council and Corporate Communications have been consulted and their comments received incorporated into this report.

Approved by

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Background Papers: Scottish Borders Council Plan (from April 2023)

Previous Minute Reference: Scottish Borders Council 23 February 2023

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

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