

# Cabinet

## 20 June 2023

### Council Plan Annual Report 2022/23

#### For Decision

**Portfolio Holder:** Cllr S Flower, Leader of the Council  
Cllr Jill Haynes, Corporate Development and Transformation

**Local Councillor(s):** All  
**Executive Director:** M Prosser, Chief Executive  
A Dunn, Executive Director, Corporate Development

Report Author: Dr David Bonner  
Title: Service Manager, Business Intelligence & Performance  
Tel: 01305 225503  
Email: david.bonner@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

**Report Status:** Public

#### Brief Summary:

The Dorset Council plan is an articulation of the priorities of the council. It reflects resident priorities, a commitment to deliver high quality services and the leadership required to deliver strong outcomes for Dorset. Dorset Council is a complex organisation, delivering a multitude of services that are important to our residents. Ensuring that its priorities are clearly articulated, and that progress is reported against, is an important element of our performance framework.

The Dorset Council Plan was refreshed in 2022 to ensure it reflected the highest priorities for residents, especially following the covid-19 pandemic. The council plan was reviewed and amended to reflect new cabinet commitments, and a new strategic delivery plan for 2022-24 was also created which sets out the council's key activities to achieve the priorities in the Dorset Council Plan 2022-24. Both the refreshed plan and the new delivery plan were approved by Full Council in October 2022.

The delivery plan is an iterative, live document which is evolving over time, to ensure a responsive approach to local and national policy and need. This report provides a summary of these iterative amendments to the delivery plan at appendix A. It is of note that the delivery plan reflects activities ranging from smaller, immediately deliverable activities to larger strategic plans which will commence in 2022-24 as milestones that will continue to deliver over the longer term.

The 5 council priorities are:

- Protecting our natural environment, climate and ecology
- Creating stronger, healthier communities
- Creating sustainable development and housing
- Driving economic prosperity
- Becoming a more responsive, customer focused council

This report provides a progress update on the council's performance and delivery against the plan since its approval by Full Council in October 2022. This is in addition to focussed and detailed progress updates in relation to specific council priorities to cabinet on a monthly basis. This will enable councillors and officers to assess progress to date. The council's performance measures are publicly available as part of the work undertaken by the two scrutiny committees. They can be found at:

- [People and Health Scrutiny Dashboard](#)
- [Place and Resources Scrutiny Dashboard](#)

The council priorities are supported by a delivery plan of 136 specific objectives. The refresh process in 2022 reflected the breadth and scope of activity required to make a positive impact for the residents of Dorset. To date, delivery progress reporting against the plan can be summarised as:

- 10 action targets are fully complete
- 114 action targets are in progress
- 12 action targets are not yet started
- 0 action targets not deliverable

**Recommendation:**

Note annual progress against the refreshed Council Plan for the period October 2022 – March 2023.

**Reason for Recommendation:**

To ensure progress towards delivery of the Council Plan is monitored.

## 1. **Council Plan 2022-24 Performance and progress report**

### 1.1 **Protecting our natural environment, climate and ecology**

The protecting our natural environment, climate and ecology priority outlines our ambitions to improve access to, and use of, Dorset's environment in a sustainable way which protects it for future generations. This commits us to taking direct action across our operations to become a carbon-neutral council by 2040, and through our wide-ranging services

and partnerships, to facilitate the changes required for the whole of Dorset to become carbon neutral by 2050, and to protect and enhance biodiversity across Dorset with 30% of land in positive management by 2030. Our operational focus is on the continued decarbonisation of our fleet, expanding electric vehicle (EV) infrastructure, reducing the emissions from our estate and increasing renewable energy generation. In addition, our leadership to support both decarbonisation and an increase in biodiversity across Dorset is also important.

## **1.2 Performance summary: protecting our natural environment, climate and ecology**

- The proportion of waste sent for reuse, recycling or composting remained high in Dorset throughout 2022/23 and performance has been on-target at approximately 60%. This level of performance has previously seen Dorset ranked highly against other councils in England. In addition, only approximately 5% of household waste was sent to landfill, meeting the council's target.
- The circa £19m Salix programme which is aimed at accelerating the decarbonisation of council buildings is nearing completion; with over 200 buildings receiving measures, including 5MW of solar PV, 15 heat pumps and a range of other measures that have reduced the carbon emissions of council buildings by 20%.
- Significant external funds have been sourced, including over £4m for the Homes Upgrade Grants, circa £1m from the two prosperity funds and over £5.5m for electric vehicle infrastructure.
- A new environment, climate and ecological strategy and action plan has been signed off, alongside a new decision-making tool and a local planning position statement with a sustainability checklist.
- A new team is in place to deliver the Local Nature Recovery strategy, and the council continues to receive national recognition for initiatives such as our verge maintenance approaches.
- A climate vulnerability assessment for council services is underway, which will lead into the development of a more strategic approach to adaptation for Dorset.
- Projects completed within the Low Carbon Dorset programme delivered a total saving of 9,626 tonnes of CO<sup>2</sup> in 2022. We are expecting this to have risen again by at least 500 tonnes by the end of March 2023. This is above the anticipated savings target.
- We have supported projects to install 11.8 Mega Watts (MW) of renewable energy capacity via the Low Carbon Dorset programme in 2022. This exceeds our target of 7.9MW.
- In working towards the council's aspiration to be carbon neutral by 2040, over the past twelve months, 17 electric vehicles have been added to the Council's vehicle fleet. These vehicles include cars and vans. As the charging infrastructure grows, more fossil fuelled vehicles

will be replaced with electric variants, alongside investigating the options for emerging technologies such as hydrogen.

### 1.3 Annual update on action plan delivery: Protecting our natural environment, climate and ecology

Completed	In progress	Not yet started
0	17	0

As an overall reflection on progress all activities are in progress with all reported with either manageable or no concerns.

### 1.4 Good progress has been made against the following:

- A new carbon and ecological decision-making tool will be integrated into council decision-making process, this has been approved by cabinet and is now undergoing operational testing prior to being used across the Council. Additionally, a new strategy and action plan have been signed off by cabinet, and there is a climate planning position statement that lends greater weight to sustainability in planning considerations (with the development of a sustainability checklist).
- We will continue to reduce the carbon emissions from our estate utilising efficient renewable energy supplies such as solar power – projects in the region of £19million have been completed on providing solar panels across Council buildings.
- We will continue the decarbonisation of the Dorset Council vehicle fleet including expansion of electric vehicles by 2024 – the County Hall pool vehicle fleet has been replaced with electric vehicles along with a number of service-based vehicles, and a further 14 EV chargers have been installed for operational and staff vehicles. Work is progressing on other sites as part of a phased approach.
- We will work across the farm estate to develop the innovation potential across renewable energy generation and technologies, agricultural and business development, and ecology and nature recovery. A new strategy has been written and next stages for this are in development.
- Employee and councillor carbon and ecological literacy training models will be available – training models are being developed in conjunction with our OD team, external training has been sourced and delivered in partnership with the MET Office. A green champions network has been developed, and their work programme is now in development.
- Dorset Council will continue to source external funds to deliver against its 2050 ambitions, with a focus on housing and transport – allocations of £19million for Salix programme and a further £5.6million to expand the public EV network in Dorset has been achieved. Additional allocations have been secured for the Homes Upgrade Grant (£4m), as well as significant funds from the Shared Prosperity Fund and the

Rural England Prosperity Fund which has enabled the council to continue the Low Carbon Dorset programme.

- We will facilitate an increase in renewable energy generation across Dorset.
- Resources have been reallocated from other parts of the council to support the climate programme and this has enabled the development of bids for external funds.
- We have responded to harbour revision orders, providing a more consistent customer experience when moving from harbour to harbour. This has been delivered through the Salix programme.

## **2. Creating stronger, healthier communities**

This priority sets out our ambition to enable our residents, working with partners, to develop strong networks of support and maintain strong communities. We are focussing on the most vulnerable in our communities to improve wellbeing and reduce inequality through collaboration between public services, community leaders, residents, and voluntary groups.

Improving the outcomes for children and young people has a long-lasting impact for health, wellbeing and economic growth of the county. Children's Services facilitates a multi-agency partnership to deliver [The Children, Young People and Families Plan](#) which supports the delivery of the council's plan in creating stronger, healthier communities. There are robust plans in place to continue the delivery of this plan into next year and work has commenced on the development of our new plan. The focus on partnership and delivery of well evidenced approaches, with a strong return on investment that deliver value for money will continue.

### **2.1 Performance summary: creating stronger, healthier communities**

- We have performed well in supporting our younger adults with a learning disability to live independently or at home with their families, therefore ensuring they achieve the best possible outcomes in their day to day lives.
- The newly formed Care Dorset is showing positive impacts on our reablement provision, maintaining people's independence.
- The number of working age adults with a learning disability in paid employment continues to be a challenge; however, we have seen increasing numbers of individuals with mental health conditions in paid employment. A different focus on improving outcomes for people will see an improvement in this area from April 2023.
- Ongoing demand in respect of hospital discharge is placing continued pressures on adult social care and our permanent placements into residential and nursing care homes have exceeded target. However, our focus on Home First and reablement should see this position

improve throughout the next year. Hospital discharge pressures continue to be a challenge for adult social care and the wider health system. Additional funding from central government has enabled us to discharge more people from hospital into reablement and back home.

- Close partnership working with our providers is ensuring that we keep people safe. Our Safeguarding position remains positive and above target.
- Domestic abuse cases continue to decrease following extensive work with partners to establish services and develop initiatives and interventions to support people.
- Carers play a really important role in supporting people who need care and support. We have increased the number of carers assessments completed each month through our work with partners and this measure remains within desired target levels.
- The numbers of reported crimes and anti-social behaviour cases have remained relatively stable across Dorset and within target levels.
- We have seen a positive and gradual increase in the number of children supported within early help over the last year, indicating that we are supporting more families at an earlier stage.
- We have seen a positively gradual increase in the number of children supported within early help over the last year (1,387 at the end March '23), indicating that we are supporting more families at an earlier stage.
- A good gauge of success of social care intervention is a low percentage of re-referrals (within 12 months of previous referral) to social care. We have performed consistently strongly with this indicator over the last 12 months and on a quarterly basis have been within target at under 20%.
- We continue to support a high number (and rate) of Children in Need in Dorset. Increases in complex referrals have led to an increase in children assessed to require statutory support.
- We support children on a child protection plan when they are at risk of significant harm. This number peaked at 342 in April 22 and there has been a clear focus on bringing this figure down, which has now reduced back to 308 at the end of March 23 against a target aim of 280.
- For our children in care, there continues to be good focus on permanence planning and reunification. Over the last year the number of Children in Care has been gradually reducing (437 children at end of March 2023) working towards a target of 420. The Nation Transfer Scheme has led to Dorset taking increasing numbers of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children into care (and these numbers are set to rise). When removing these children from our in-care numbers we have reduced to 403 children which is comfortably within target and the lowest since Dorset Council formed.

- The average caseload of lead social workers has remained within target over the last year (15.84 at end of March '23) and we have seen a positive recent recruitment drive.
- The percentage of children with an Education Health and Care Plan issued within 20 weeks has fluctuated throughout the year dropping to 41% in December '22 but has seen an improvement to 71.7% on time in March '23. A clear focus on improving this performance is in place with action plans within specific localities.
- Care leavers in bed and breakfast accommodation continues to be an area of very close scrutiny for the council. We have seen the number increase to 6 at end of March and we continue to work very closely with our Housing colleagues to support this reduction to 0.

## 2.2 Annual update on action plan delivery: creating stronger, healthier communities

Completed	In progress	Not yet started
5	25	0

There has been good progress across the work defined in the priority including 5 fully completed activities:

- Care Dorset, the new provider delivering Adult Social Care services for our Dorset residents went live in October 2022. This was the replacement for the services previously provided by Tricuro. Since then, Care Dorset has progressed well. The new company had an unannounced inspection by the regulator in March '23 and received a good CQC rating for reablement, as a result.
- A new children's residential home in Weymouth was opened in October 2023 and welcomed its first residents in November 2023.
- The Harbour Service has been launched and is delivering outreach and residential provision to young people. This continues to provide an effective approach for supporting young people to remain in the care of their families through the delivery of outreach. As at the end of September 2022, 153 young people have been supported since December 2020. Of these 100 young people who were on the edge of care were supported by outreach. Only 6 young people entered care meaning that 94% children were supported to remain at home.
- Local accommodation for Dorset's care leavers was opened in Weymouth in April 2023. This is providing homes for up to twelve young people leaving care.
- A new model to support and retain foster carers and improve stability has been established, called the Mockingbird Model. Three constellations have been launched within the local foster carers network and the fourth and fifth are due to be launched in 2023.

Good progress has been made against the following:

- The Strategic Alliance, stakeholders from across Dorset's partnership, including Children's Services, Police, NHS Dorset, Dorset Healthcare, Schools, Early Years settings, Fire and Rescue and Representatives covering 3500 voluntary and community sector organisations, have progressed our Children, Young People and Families' Plan 2020-23 improving outcomes for children, young people and families in the communities of Dorset. We are updating our plan, to a bold and ambitious ten-year plan, building on the success of our 2020-23 plan and meeting the emerging changes to legislation, government policy and the priorities of our communities, putting families at the heart of everything we do. This is on-track.
- As part of the delivery of our Children, Young People and Families' Plan 2020-23, we have established the Dorset Education Board. The Education Board drives forward one of the priorities in our Children, Young People & Families' Plan, 'Best Education for All'. This is on-track.
- Continued delivery of the Holiday Activity and Food Programme over a wide range of venues and expanding access to activities for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities as well as those eligible for Free School Meals.
- We are working in partnership with others including schools/early years settings, Citizens' Advice in Dorset and Age UK, we have supported people through DWP funded Household Support Fund, getting money into resident's pockets to help with the cost of living.
- We have welcomed Ofsted to our early years provision and to our Youth Justice Service which highlighted areas of strength.
- Awarded a contract to Bournemouth Churches Housing Association to deliver PAUSE – a programme to support women who have had multiple children removed from their care which we know will offer them much better support but also prevent the likelihood of this happening in the future.
- Delivered a 'healthy movers' project in East Dorset which has proven not only to help with physical activity but to improve wellbeing and speech and language too.
- Supported young people to take part in local democracy through our youth parliament elections, youth council and in the Takeover challenge to enable them to have their say in how services are run.
- Continued distributing over £100k in grants per year to local youth organisations to create activities and opportunities for young people.
- Created the [Pineapple](#) project in the local community in Weymouth to help girls feel more safe in their communities.
- Building a partnership with the [My Time](#) charity to provide more support for young carers.
- We have secured funding for children's services through some successful national bids to help us to do more locally including Family



Hubs, supporting young people in residential care to 'Stay Close' to their residential care provision and support for workforce development and our strategy for reducing parental conflict.

- Launched our [Safeguarding Families Together](#) project to embed whole family approaches, with a particular focus on addressing the needs of children living with parental substance use, parental mental ill-health or domestic abuse.
- Continued to deliver our SEND Strategy and continued our investment in increasing SEND Provision through the investment in special school places and inclusion hubs and offering earlier support through our graduated response and agreed a new Accessibility Strategy to seeks to improve accessibility for children with disabilities and improve sense of belonging.
- Opened our first 2 family Hubs in Ferndown and Wareham and agreed a partnership approach to an intergenerational Family Hub in Swanage which will be supported by a Community Asset Transfer.
- Relunched Dorset fostering with new website and branding to increase those who [Foster with Dorset Council](#) and agreed an increase in the fees and allowances for foster carers.
- The library strategy has been developed over 2 phases of consultation. Over 12,500 survey responses were received, and 21 engagement workshops were undertaken, the strategy and action plan have been refined as a result. This will be presented for sign off at Cabinet in July 23.
- The initial stage of the optimising waste routes has been completed. The project is now in the second stage where the model will be refined with an estimated completion date by November/December 23.
- The review of leisure centres has commenced with the initial report on a potential future strategy expected July 23.
- Voluntary & community sector organisations continue to be commissioned for vital infrastructure support. This programme continues to run well with a commitment for 5 years.
- The 'Dorset Together' network of voluntary and community organisations continues to perform well.
- A Feeding Dorset event took place in April 23 to support the food projects across Dorset and was also used to network other support opportunities. The food Security Network continues to be used to provide information and support. 5 pop-up larders now exist with another 10 planned in rural areas of most need in Dorset (NHS funding).

### **3. Creating sustainable development and housing**

The creating sustainable development and housing priority outlines our ambitions to work with government, registered housing providers, community land trusts and local housing partners to deliver affordable,

suitable and decent housing. It also outlines the desire to work with our partners to promote our climate and ecological priorities by providing sustainable services such as rainwater harvesting, solar panels and other such approaches. The overall outcome of the priority looks to deliver sustainable and suitable housing for all now and in the future.

### 3.1 Performance summary: creating sustainable development and housing

- The number of households in B&B continues to be higher than desired at 129 in March 23, compared with 100 for the same period last year. The ongoing work of the homeless and housing solutions teams is helping us to reduce numbers where possible.
- 15 % of families with children and pregnant women in B&B exceeding 6 week stays in March 23, which is higher than the same period last year, but down from a peak of 27% in December 22. A lack of family sized accommodation and the dominance of the Airbnb market is an ongoing challenge.
- We are projecting the delivery of 611 affordable homes in the Dorset area and have also seen an increase in the completion of shared ownership properties. More funding is being made available to support low-cost home ownership.
- Demands on the service in respect of homeless cases are increasing as are the complexity of cases. Homeless approaches were 3996 in 2022/23 compared to 3408 in 2021/22. The cost-of-living crisis and ongoing interest rate increases are a significant factor. The increased demand has also impacted on the ability to undertake prevention activity.

### 3.2 Annual update on action plan delivery: creating sustainable development and housing

Completed	In progress	Not yet started
0	11	0

This priority of the council plan contains four activities which are led within housing and seven which are led within the Place directorate. As an overall reflection on progress all activities are in progress with all reported with either manageable or no concerns.

Reflecting upon the delivery of the four activities within housing, there has been good progress to date:

- From a strategic perspective the service is on-track with the production of the Housing Strategy which is due to be considered by cabinet in December 2023.

- A good start has been made towards the ambition of ten empty properties being brought back into use, with a former empty property in Blandford being opened during April 2023.
- There has been significant progress towards the target of 400 sustainable homes to be built per year. Forecasts show that 450 affordable homes are due to be built by end of March 2023, exceeding the original target of 400.
- To increase the amount of temporary accommodation that is available funding has been agreed to acquire 30 family homes. These will initially be utilised for temporary accommodation for Ukrainian and Afghan households. Further funding is being acquired via the Rough Sleeper Action Plan as part of a government grant.
- There has been progress in the prevention of homelessness which has led to the number of households in bed and breakfast accommodation not rising, despite a significant rise (31%) in number of people presenting as about to be homeless. Relationships with registered providers of social housing are continuing well with a quarterly liaison meeting in place.

Reflecting on the seven activities within the Place directorate there has again been good progress:

- From a strategic perspective progress on the new local plan is continuing in accordance with the milestones in the Local Development Scheme (with joint working on the long-term plan). Final adoption of this is dependent upon the examination completed by an independently appointed inspector.
- As part of the local plan a new settlement for Dorset will be progressed. There is ongoing work to robustly assess against evidence to ensure that any environmental issues can be addressed.
- Planning transformation is on track, with all legacy planning systems converged. This success is being built on by continued customer focused improvements to the online register.
- To progress towards a planning policy which encourages developers to integrate renewable energy approaches, a position statement was considered at Cabinet in March and consultation will now commence.
- Due to uncertainty over the transitional arrangements with proposed changes to the national planning system and challenges in connection with nutrient neutrality requirements there is some risk over the housing delivery targets. This is being monitored and should be resolved with the adoption of a new local plan.
- To work towards the activity that all developments will be designed in line with the 'planning for the future' white paper and the 'levelling up and regeneration' bill, local plan milestones will allow for the new plan to be aligned with the revised planning system once it is agreed at parliament.

#### **4. Driving economic prosperity**

The driving economic prosperity priority outlines our ambitions to support sustainable economic growth across the county, enabling high-quality jobs through improvements to productivity, sustainability, and accessibility, creating great places to live, work and visit.

During the first year of the refreshed council plan the national landscape was shifting and regional policy was being amended by the levelling up agenda. Dorset Council made a successful bid in 2022 securing £19.5m.

##### **4.1 Performance summary: driving economic prosperity**

- 20,600 businesses in Dorset. An increase of 310 from last year.
- 82 business births per 10,000 working-age population. An improvement from 71 in 2021.
- 1.7% unemployment rate. A fall from 4.4% for the same period last year, following the pattern seen in England and the Southwest. The unemployment rates in England, SW and Dorset are now back to pre-covid levels.
- 74.8% employment rate, down from 75.4%. Although the employment rate has decreased, the unemployment rate has not increased. Instead, more people have become economically inactive, meaning they are not actively participating in the labour force or seeking employment. This may be because they've chosen to take early retirement, are long-term sick, a student or looking after family.
- 2.4% Claimant count rate. Slightly better than the rate last year of 2.8%.
- 500 new jobs in the Maritime sector, 1000 new jobs in Advanced Engineering sector, 3000 new jobs in Tourism, 1000 new jobs in the Care sector, 0 new jobs in the Agritech sector.
- £579 average weekly earnings for full time jobs in Dorset in 2022, up from £549 in 2021. This compares to £611 in the South West and £646 in England.
- 7.3% of jobs pay below the Living Wage (as defined by the Living Wage Foundation), down from 18.5% in the previous year. The fall was also seen nationally and may reflect increases in the minimum wage, or a change in the mix of part-time and full-time workers.
- £31.90 Gross Value Added (GVA) per hour. Up from £30.60 in the previous year. Still a big gap the UK which is £37.70.
- 11x house prices to residence-based earnings ratio. This was the highest ratio on record. Previous year was 9.6. This compares to 9x in the South West and 8x in England.

- The gap in attainment between children who are eligible for Free School Meals and those who are not (the 'Disadvantage Gap') for English and Maths GCSEs 5+ is 26% compared to national 27%. However, this figure needs to be considered in the context that our non-disadvantaged pupils are not performing well. 25% disadvantaged pupils achieving 5+ Basics compared to 30% nationally.
- The percentage disadvantaged gap in achievement across all Early Learning Goals is 29% compared to 20% nationally (non FSM eligible pupils in Dorset are 1% above national at 68%, FSM eligible are 8% below).
- Key Stage 1 disadvantaged attainment gap - For reading the gap in Dorset is the same as national. The gap for writing is 5% higher than national and 3% higher for maths. In both cases it is similar to the South-West.
- The disadvantaged gap for the combined reading/writing/maths at Key Stage 2 is 25% in Dorset compared to 23% national (27% in the South West). This smaller gap is in fact due to lower attainment in Dorset by both groups – Disadvantaged are 7% below national and non-disadvantaged are 5% below.
- 45% of Dorset pupils achieved a grade 5 or higher in English and Maths at Key Stage 4 compared to 50% nationally (49% in the South-West and 47% for our authorities like us). This is due largely to low attainment in Maths where girls are 5% below national and Dorset is in the bottom 20% of local authorities.
- Percentage of children with 'a good level of development' at early years foundation stage indicating school readiness - Overall, 66% of Dorset children achieved a 'good level of development' in 2021/22, 1% above national.
- Percentage of children achieving expected standard at KS2 at reading, writing and maths in Dorset is 4% below national (55% compared to 59%). Dorset is below national for all subjects, with Maths a particular concern. The Dorset Education Board, bringing together representatives from across the sector, is bringing a sharp focus on achievement at Key Stage 2, with a particular emphasis on Maths. The Board has a task and finish group focussing on Maths
- Suspension rates have been increasing post pandemic. Dorset had rates below national for Spring 2021/22 (the last nationally available comparable data): 2.27 compared to 2.4 nationally. However, internal data suggests this has risen to a rate of 3.5 for the spring term 2022/23.
- The most recently available comparable data shows a significant reduction in permanent exclusions in Dorset. In the spring term 2021/22 the rate per 10,000 of the school population in Dorset was 0.1, compared to 0.3 nationally and in the South-West. However internal data would suggest that these rates are increasing.

- Absenteeism and the rates of those deemed persistently absent (missing 10% or more of sessions) have risen significantly over the last few years. The most recent comparable data shows the Dorset absence rate of children in schools in 2021/22 was above national at 8.2%, up from 5.1% in 2017/18. The number of severe and persistent absentees have doubled from the years prior to Covid. Dorset held an attendance workshop in September 2022 which was attended by over 80 delegates from schools, health, police, youth justice service as well as Dorset Council Officers. This led to the development of the Dorset Attendance Strategy and Plan which is being delivered through locality attendance networks

#### 4.2 Annual update on action plan delivery: driving economic prosperity

Completed	In progress	Not yet started
4	40	3

Throughout 2023/24 the plans will be developed, the economic growth strategy reviewed, and implementation will begin.

There has been good progress across the work defined in the priority including 4 fully completed activities:

- Levelling Up Funding of £19.5m secured
- Completion of the 5G RuralDorset programme
- Superfast connectivity expanded working with BDUK
- Ultrafast connectivity maximised across Dorset utilising grant funding secured from Building Dorset UK (BDUK), the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)

Areas of the delivery plan that are not yet started include the following:

- The 5G adoption programme will commence following announcement of competition and potential funding from the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology. This is expected in Spring 2023.
- The Dorset Digital Innovation Network is not yet in place however the strategic business case is in preparation. This will commence following an initial development session with commercial partners.
- Innovation for digital connectivity in relation to wireless broadband is dependent on additional funding being secured. This work is currently awaiting the outcome of a £570k bid to the Rural Fund.

Improvement activity that is underway and on track include:

- The Dorset shared prosperity fund investment plan was fully approved in January 2023 and a local partnership has been formed resulting in the commencement of the cost-of-living support programme.

- Project delivery of the £19.5m levelling up fund for Dorset has commenced with work secured for Weymouth peninsula, New Bond Street sites and for the demolition of North Quay.
- A commercial development 'Quadrant 2' at Dorset Innovation Park is in progress with contractors approved to start in 2023. This will provide additional facilities for sector investment and lead to new job opportunities in the county.
- We have so far committed £1m to community and £2.5m for business support to supply grants to businesses.
- The future farm resilience fund programme has been available since October 2022, providing support to farmers and land managers during agricultural transition.
- The Dorset education board is independently chaired and has been established focusing on working together to deliver opportunities and tackling the challenges of the education system in Dorset.
- The shared prosperity fund is providing Dorset with £6m over 3 years for skills development. An investment plan has been developed and from September 2022 work to provide additional numeracy skills support to adults was underway and in delivery through the 'multiply' investment plan.
- Dorset Council is committed to increasing social value and as such contracts awards by the council continue to encourage supply chains to support skills development and training opportunities for Dorset residents.
- Delivery of Phase 1 of the Defence Innovation Centre (BattleLab) has begun, with the aim of maximising the catalytic opportunity to attract further investment in Dorset Innovation Park.

There has also significant progress made in relation to digital, innovation, skills and connectivity:

- Residents have been supported to access and use digital tools including the supply of over 200 devices during and after the pandemic. A programme to supply a further 500 devices is in place for delivery by March 2025.
- Embedded digital champions to support residents with increasing their digital skills and confidence continue to be successfully received. Over 800 frontline employees are already delivering this support to communities they work with.
- Funding from the Local Government Association has been committed to train five new fibre engineers in Dorset helping to fill the skills gap as the Dorset network is improved.
- A coding day was held for Dorset schools with over 2000 students learning and exploring their digital skills, supported by Dorset Council, BCP Council and 25 local tech companies.

- We continue to successfully work with Building Dorset UK to ensure Dorset benefits at the earliest stage for funding and pilots under the new UK gigabit programme.

## **5. Becoming a more responsive, customer focused council**

Becoming a more responsive, customer focussed council covers a wide breadth of our organisation, with a focus on how we work as one council to deliver effective value for money services for our customers and our organisation. The scope includes how our customers contact us, customer engagement, our way of operating, digital, technology, accessibility, data intelligence and records, building in our communities, our employee organisational development strategy and our financial model.

The launch of the 'Our Future Council Programme' working with Local Partnerships is a positive step towards bringing the direction needed for future ways of working for the organisation. The business case is currently in development and will be submitted to Cabinet in November providing detail of the opportunities for Dorset through this whole-organisational change programme.

However, as an organisation we're not waiting for the accelerating customer transformation work to commence, and 'in-progress' activity continues and will be aligned in due course. In recent months examples of progress include: the launch of the first version of the online customer account, our data & business intelligence strategy, parking services customer contact moving into Dorset Direct, a new one council out of hours service and the sign video service which provides a video relay service for customers whose preferred choice of communication is British sign language.

### **5.1 Performance summary: becoming a more responsive, customer focussed council**

- Our customer satisfaction surveys across a number of services have maintained excellent levels of satisfaction.
- We have seen a year-on-year increase in the number of complaints managed by the corporate claims team – from 545 in 2021/22 to 773 in 2022/23. This continues an ongoing increase of 166% since 2019.
- We had 882,000 visits to our libraries in 2022/23, a considerable increase on the previous year. In addition, we reviewed our new 10-year Library strategy which will look to the future of Dorset's libraries, and how they can best meet the needs of local residents and communities, now and in the future.
- Dorset Direct handled 288,722 contacts across a range of enquiries with 81% of customers' requests resolved at first point of contact,



avoiding the need for multiple interactions with other services across the council.

## 5.2 Annual update on action plan delivery: becoming a more responsive, customer focused council

Completed	In progress	Not yet started
1	21	9

Progress across this priority has reported 1 area fully completed:

- We have published a Data and Business Intelligence strategy, as approved by Cabinet in February 2023. Work is underway to develop and deliver the organisational wide action plan.

There are 9 areas of the delivery plan that are not yet, or only just started and as such we are not in a position to yet measure impact:

- In conjunction with changes to the way we work, we will deliver more customer focussed services which will result in a leaner application portfolio and roadmap, integrated systems and processes which provide good experiences for our internal and external customers – First workshop related to Application Portfolio Management was held on 4 May 2023.
- We will seek to increasing the number of residents who think the council delivers value for money through our commercial strategy and approach. This will include improvements to the way we transact with our customers.
- By 2026, a review of how local depots are used and managed will be complete.
- We will undertake regular self-assessment of our data culture, using data maturity to show improvement - this is going to be a piece of work which is implemented as part of the data and BI strategy.
- We will work closely with our partners to overcome barriers to join up and improve the quality of our data – some activity has taken place with regard to improving data quality such as driving up the number of NHS numbers stored on customer records.
- We will encourage a culture where the importance of data is understood by everyone within the council – some activity has taken place, for example with regard to data quality improvements within the SEND service, this will be more broadly addressed as part of the data and BI strategy.
- We will provide learning and development for staff to understand the power of sharing data as well as the legal, moral and financial implications – to be addressed as part of the data and BI strategy.
- We will bring together operational data to support a better service to customers and strategic level data to help ensure better outcomes and

decisions by the council and with our partners - to be addressed as part of the data and BI strategy.

- We will review our ways of working to improve the way we respond to customers on common transactions e.g. enquiries and payments. This will also include a review and alignment of the internal systems used.

There has been significant progress made:

- By 2023 we will publish our customer strategy (now called Our Future Council) and a transformation plan to achieve a modern, customer first operating model by 2030.
- We will reduce the number of ways customers contact the council and bring more high-volume customer management and assessment into our professional customer services, Dorset Direct. Previous customer transformation work has taken place with parking services which included a transition of the way customers contact them to using Dorset Direct in November 22. A One Council Out of hours services for Dorset Council went live in October 22, this has consolidated numerous out of hours offerings. Conversations are also taking place about the future model for how customers contact adult services. The Accelerating Customer Transformation programme will build on these changes as part of the future operating model for the Council.
- Embed our accessibility principles and assessment guidance within our strategy plans to ensure we create accessible, inclusive, and easy to use services for our customers. In March 2023 a SignVideo service was launched for our customers who use sign language as their preferred means of communicating.
- We will develop our new customer platform and customer account following the initial soft launch in April 23. This will be developed to provide easy to use, accessible, services, increasing the number of customers using online services independently or with assistance.
- We will underpin the delivery of how we work in the future through our continued development of our strategy for automation and self-service. To achieve this, we will invest and explore advances in technology, automation, artificial intelligence and digital ways of delivering services to increase productivity and help manage demand.
- The council's engagement and consultation processes have been reviewed and a new platform is being embedded in summer 2023. This will ensure improvements in the way that residents' views are sought, listened to and acted on.
- Our medium-term financial strategy will continue to act as a key financial tool that drives good financial decision making and supports strategy, transformation and commercial thinking.
- We are working to enhance our commissioning activity through effective market shaping so that we are able to meet need in the most-cost effective way. This commercial approach is set out in the Commercial Strategy approved by cabinet.

- A new approach, working with the Dorset ICS will support activity to better engage with customers. This is focused on in depth qualitative engagement.
- The Equality Diversity and Inclusion strategy and refreshed action plan is being implemented to ensure Dorset Council continues to meet its duties under the Equality Act 2010. This work includes a network which is providing opportunities for customer collaboration and problem-solving ways to remove barriers to accessibility.
- We will deliver a new asset management strategy, rationalising our property, co-locating services and developing our commercial approach to property. This is due to be complete by the end of 2023.
- An efficient, hybrid way of working for all council employees has been implemented and in 2023 further work will ensure the best use of office accommodation.
- A refresh of our People Strategy is planned for 2023/24 which will support and develop skills within leadership and workforce, recognising talent, improving retention and embedding diversity and inclusion and helping employees to feel ready for change.
- Work to improve Dorset's brand as an employer is underway and is helping to showcase our opportunities so we can recruit and retain the best people. Efforts have been reflected in the success of the 'Work for Dorset' social media campaign which has seen impressive growth in the last six months.
- The number of users of the Dorset Care Record is increasing, with an average of 81,265 user logins per month recorded in 2022/23, reaching over 100,000 in March 2023. In 2023 an adults alert feed has also been successfully added to the system.
- Progress is continuing to modernise the way information and case records are stored and accessed, supporting an agile workforce and an improved customer experience when records or information is requested.

## **6. Financial Implications**

The Dorset Council Plan and Delivery Plan 2022-24 is costed and will be delivered in line with the council's budget strategy and medium-term financial plan (MTFP).

The MTFP shows how we intend to ensure that money will be prioritised to those services that matter most to residents and how the council will re-shape itself to be better able to deliver those services within the available funding. This year's budget setting exercise takes place against a national and global background of extreme pressures for councils. There is high and sustained inflation and we have seen a prolonged period of political instability. The war in Ukraine and its humanitarian and economic consequences are also being felt globally.

## **7. Environmental Implications**

Dorset Council is committed to delivering the Natural Environment, Climate and Ecological strategy and as such, the new council plan incorporates a priority to ensure delivery of this. The purpose of our council plan is to ensure a joined-up and consistent approach across all council services to ensure that we improve access to and use of Dorset's natural environment in a sustainable way which protects it for future generations, as well as reducing our impact on the climate.

**8. Well-being and Health Implications**

The council continues to deliver services to support residents with their specific needs. The Council Plan is designed to impact positively on the well-being and health of all through the joined up, consistent delivery of over 450 services. This includes the provision of universal and specialist services to residents and businesses alongside benefits driven from responsible management of the natural environment.

**9. Other Implications**

None

**10. Risk Assessment**

HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Low

Residual Risk: Low

**11. Equalities Impact Assessment**

We are committed to ensuring fair and accessible services for everyone in Dorset through the delivery of services and improvements as set out in our council plan. Where the council will make changes to a service or offer, an equality impact assessment will be undertaken to ensure due regard of the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty.

The overall council plan has not been the subject of a separate equality impact assessment but the changes upon which delivery of the plan will depend will themselves be subject to impact assessments.

**12. Appendices**

Appendix A: Updated Council Plan Delivery Plan

**13. Background Papers**

Dorset Council Plan 2022-24 approved by Council in October 2022

Dorset Council Delivery Plan 2022-24 approved by Council in October 2022