

# Draft Strategic Plan 2024-29

For Cabinet on 25 January 2024

---

## Summary

**Lead Member:** Cllr Ben Chapelard, Leader of the Council

**Lead Director:** William Benson, Chief Executive

**Head of Service & Report Author:** Ian Hirst, Head of Digital & Communications

**Classification:** Public document (non-exempt)

**Wards Affected:** All

Approval Timetable	Date
Management Board	8 January 2024
Portfolio Holder	Councillor Ben Chapelard
Cabinet Advisory Board	24 January 2024
Cabinet	25 January 2024

## Recommendations

Officer / Committee recommendations as supported by the Portfolio Holder:

1. That Cabinet note the draft Strategic Plan
2. That Cabinet approve the draft Strategic Plan for public consultation

# 1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1 In 2022 the Borough Partnership was formed and set five priorities to guide the Council's service planning, the 'Focus On Five'. This was followed by 'Building a Better Borough', an interim plan through to 2024, setting out the priorities and direction of travel of the Borough Partnership.
- 1.2 'Building a Better Borough' was approved in February 2023 with a commitment to begin work on the production of a longer-term strategic plan for approval in 2024. This report and the associated draft Strategic Plan (Appendix A) marks the conclusion of the first of several iterative phases of designing and developing the new plan and seeks approval to proceed with public consultation.
- 1.3 The purpose of this first phase of consultation is to confirm that the priorities and direction of travel are broadly correct before work commences to identify the specific actions and projects that the Council will commit resources to.
- 1.4 Following the first consultation, the plan will be amended as appropriate and an accompanying action plan produced, which will outline the specific projects / actions that will be completed to deliver the ambition. This will be brought forward for consultation in summer 2024, with the aim of approving the final version of a new Strategic Plan in September 2024.
- 1.5 The Strategic Plan will be for a rolling five-year period, running initially from 2024-29 and will be refreshed annually.

## 2. Ambition & Priorities

- 2.1 The draft Strategic Plan sets out our ambition to

*'A place where all generations can live healthy and fulfilling lives in vibrant and connected communities.'*

- 2.2 The ambition is supported by five priorities:

- **Climate Action** We will continue our work to create a cleaner, green and carbon zero future for our Borough.
- **Our Environment** We will protect and enhance nature and our heritage.
- **Sustainable Growth** We want the right types of homes in the right places with the right infrastructure, jobs and local businesses.
- **Vibrant Economy** We want to support our urban and rural economies to thrive, creating local jobs in our local communities.

- **Community Wellbeing** We will support our urban and rural communities to flourish and fulfil their potential to be caring, healthy, connected and inclusive.

- 2.3 Each priority is supported by a set of goals, which the Council will use to guide its planning for future activities, service delivery, projects, policies and strategies.
- 2.4 Focusing the efforts and resources of the Council on these priorities will deliver outcomes that are important to residents, preserve and enhance what makes the Borough of Tunbridge Wells special and contribute towards the Council’s role as a community leader for action on climate change.

### 3. Evidence base and consultation to date

3.1 Figure 1 below illustrates the stages of creating the Strategic Plan.

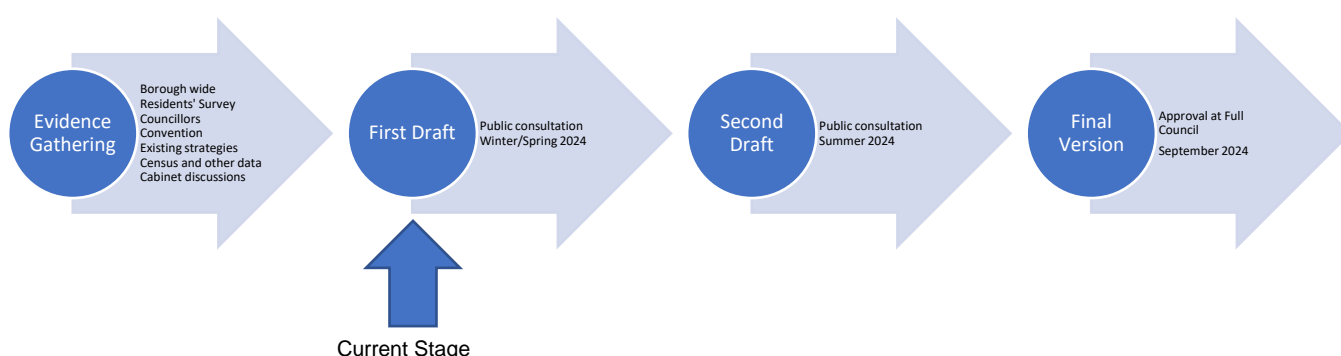


Figure 1: Process of Strategic Plan creation

- 3.2 The Council’s existing strategies and policies contribute towards the priorities in the draft Strategic Plan. The Council’s interim plan, ‘Building a Better Borough’ has also been reviewed as part of the creation of the draft Strategic Plan.
- 3.3 During the summer of 2023, the Council undertook its first borough wide residents survey since 2015. Over 1,500 respondents gave their views about the services offered by the Council and what they felt was important or needed improving in their areas. The results of the survey are available on the Council’s website and were presented to Cabinet to help inform discussions about priorities for the new Strategic Plan.
- 3.4 In June 2023, a Councillors’ Convention was held at the Assembly Hall Theatre at which Borough, County and Parish councillors from all parties discussed what’s good and needs improving in the borough and other priorities for the future in the 7 themes of culture, sport, leisure, environment, housing, transport and infrastructure.
- 3.5 In autumn 2023, all Borough Councillors were asked to submit ideas for inclusion in a future Strategic Plan. 55 responses were received and summarised into overarching themes, which contribute towards the goals of each priority. The specific projects submitted will be assessed for feasibility and potential inclusion in future action plans, accompanying the final version of the Strategic Plan.

- 3.6 Having brought together the information from these initiatives, Members of Cabinet collaboratively discussed and agreed five priorities for the Strategic Plan, which has now been prepared for public consultation.
- 3.7 Following this first stage of consultation and feedback the priorities will be reviewed and adjusted where appropriate. An accompanying action plan to deliver on the priorities and ambition, along with a set of performance measures, will be drawn up to be consulted on during summer 2024.

## **4. Options Considered, Preferred Option and Reason, Consultation on Options**

- 4.1 The Council's Constitution requires the Strategic Plan be consulted upon. There is no alternative action which could be taken.

### **Recommendation from Cabinet Advisory Board**

- 4.2 Due to the short duration between Communities Cabinet Advisory Board on 24 January and Cabinet on 25 January, the recommendations from the Cabinet Advisory Board will be shared verbally.

## **5. Implementation**

- 5.1 Following decision and expiry of the call-in period, public consultation on the draft Strategic Plan will commence on the 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2024 and run until the 15<sup>th</sup> March 2024, a period of 6 weeks.
- 5.2 Feedback from the consultation will be considered and where appropriate adjustments to the priorities will be made. A further draft of the plan will then be issued and consulted on later in the year, with an accompanying action plan and performance indicators against which progress on the plan may be measured.

## **6. Appendices and Background Documents**

Appendices:

- Appendix A: draft Strategic Plan 2024-27

Background Papers:

- [Residents Survey 2023 Results](#)
- [Building a Better Borough](#)

## **7. Cross Cutting Issues**

### **A. Legal (including the Human Rights Act)**

The Council's constitution requires that the Council adopts a Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan sets out the Council's ambition and priorities for the benefit of the people of Tunbridge Wells borough. There are no immediate legal implications arising from this report but any legal implications arising from projects and activities supporting the fulfilment of the Strategic Plan will be assessed by the responsible officer and their Portfolio Holder at the appropriate time.

Claudette Valmond, Head of Legal Partnership, 12 January 2024

### **B. Finance and Other Resources**

The Strategic Plan sets out the Council's ambition and priorities for the benefit of the people of Tunbridge Wells borough. Any financial or other resources required to fulfil the Strategic Plan will be developed in conjunction with the Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Whilst it is anticipated that the Strategic Plan will ultimately lead to a series of projects and initiatives (with financial and resource implications) that will contribute towards the achievement of priorities and objectives in the Plan, the act of going out to consultation at this time and as a result of this report will not have any financial impacts.

Lee Colyer, Director of Finance, Policy and Development, 8<sup>th</sup> January 2024

### **C. Staffing**

There are no implications for staffing structures or arrangements as a result of this report.

Nicky Carter, Head of HR, Customer Service and Culture

### **D. Risk Management**

Any proposals and initiatives proposed within the Strategic Plan would be subject to the Council's risk management procedures. These are operated at two levels, strategic risks and operational risks.

Ian Hirst, Head of Digital & Communications.

## E. Environment (inc. Biodiversity) and Sustainability

The strategic plan aligns with the council's 2030 net zero target and does not have any material negative climate impacts. Climate impacts will need to be considered on an individual project basis when delivering against the priorities of the strategic plan. This is to ensure that the council's work reduces carbon emissions, improves the local environment, mitigates against the negative impacts of climate change, and aids the council in achieving its 2030 net zero target.

Henry Saunders, Sustainability Manager, 9<sup>th</sup> January 2024

## F. Community Safety

One of the priorities in the draft Strategic Plan is Community Wellbeing. It is anticipated that ultimately the actions identified to be delivered in support of this priority will have a positive impact on Community Safety. At this stage there are no specific actions that can be assessed as having a direct positive or negative impact on Community Safety.

Section 17, Crime and Disorder Act 1998

*17(1) Without prejudice to any other obligation imposed on it, it shall be the duty of each authority to which this section applies to exercise its various functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area.*

Terry Hughes, Community Safety Manager, 8<sup>th</sup> January 2024

## G. Equalities

The Council's Strategic Plan has potential to impact on all protected characteristics as it relates to all people who live in, work in, or visit the Borough. It also has the potential to include outcomes that support all aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty. We have commenced an equality impact assessment of the draft Strategic Plan to identify where the five priorities may be relevant to each of the protected characteristics. However, it is too early to draw conclusions about specific impacts at this stage. The equality impact assessment will be reviewed following the first phase of consultation and the conclusions from that review will be presented to Members prior to the second phase of consultation.

Ian Hirst, Head of Digital and Communications, in consultation with Sarah Lavallie, Corporate Governance Officer, 12<sup>th</sup> January 2024.

Section 149, Equality Act 2010

*149(1) A public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to –*

*(a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;*

*(b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;*

*(c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.*

## **H. Data Protection**

There are no Data Protection impacts as a result of this report.

Article 5, UK GDPR (Data Protection Act 2018).

*1. Personal data shall be:*

*(a) processed lawfully, fairly and in a transparent manner in relation to individuals;*

*(b) collected for specific, explicit and legitimate purposes and not further processed in a manner that is incompatible with those purposes;*

*(c) adequate, relevant and limited to what is necessary in relation to the purposes for which they are processed;*

*(d) accurate and, where necessary, kept up to date;*

*(e) kept in a form which permits identification of data subjects for no longer than is necessary for the purposes for which the personal data are processed;*

*(f) processed in a manner that ensures appropriate security of the personal data, including protection against unauthorised or unlawful processing and against accidental loss, destruction or damage, using appropriate technical or organisational measures.*

Andy Sturtivant, Data Protection Officer, 10<sup>th</sup> January 2024

## **I. Health and Safety**

There are no Health and Safety implications as a result of this report.

Mike Catling, Health & Safety Advisor, 8<sup>th</sup> January 2024

## **J. Health and Wellbeing**

One of the priorities in the draft Strategic Plan is Community Wellbeing. It is anticipated that ultimately the actions identified to be delivered in support of this priority will have a positive impact on residents' lives across the borough. At this stage there are no specific actions that can be assessed as having a direct positive or negative impact on Health and Wellbeing.

- 1. Areas of deprivation: Will the proposal have an impact (positive or negative) on those living in areas of deprivation within the borough (40% most deprived in the country). These are Sherwood, Southborough and High Brooms, Broadwater and Rusthall.*
- 2. Healthier lifestyle opportunities: Will residents be more or less able to make healthier lifestyle choices such as physical activity (e.g. active travel, access to green spaces or access to leisure facilities), healthy eating (e.g. proximity or access to take away shops, allotments, food stores) and being smokefree*
- 3. Social and Community networks: Will the proposal make it easier for people to interact with one another e.g. encouraging community engagement*
- 4. Living and Working Conditions: does to proposal improve work or home environments, increase job, education or training opportunities, improve access to health services or housing*
- 5. General Socioeconomic, cultural and environmental conditions: Are there any other factors that may impact the above*

Ian Hirst, Head of Digital & Communications.