



From mountain to sea

ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL PLAN 2020-2022

September 2020

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Council Plan 2020-2022

Foreword

In the three years since the implementation of our 2017-2022 Council Plan, the Council and our communities have faced a variety of challenges; from the uncertainty of Brexit to continued budget constraints. These challenges have recently been compounded by the Covid-19 pandemic, which is likely to have a long-lasting effect on our local citizens and communities and around the world.

In a rapidly changing social and economic landscape, the Council has and will continue to work hard to mitigate the impacts of the pandemic on our communities and businesses alike. **In order to do this, we must draw a sharper focus on those services which are most essential to the wellbeing of our residents; the future opportunities for all our children and young people; the development of local economy, and support for our environment, so that we can continue to prioritise service delivery and associated resources to the areas that are most in need.** In light of this, we have renewed our Council Plan and replaced the previous eleven priorities with **six new, more focused, strategic priorities**, that better reflect our current challenges and aspirations. These strategic priorities fall under the three pillars of:

- Our People;
- Our Environment; and
- Our Economy

Our renewed **Council Plan 2020-2022** can only be achieved by continued collaborative working and with the combined expertise that our communities, partners and employees bring when delivering improved outcomes in Aberdeenshire. This teamwork has been vital in the last six months when dealing with the immediate issues arising from the pandemic and I am incredibly proud of the work and dedication shown from all involved.

While it is accepted that the shape of local services will continue to change at a faster pace than anything we are used to, the new **Council Plan 2020-2022** provides clear strategic direction for our local communities, at a time of universal uncertainty.

Councillor Jim Gifford
Leader of Aberdeenshire Council

Commitment

There have been numerous challenges for Aberdeenshire Council since the roll out of our Council Plan in 2017, the most notable being the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent effects that this has had on our residents and communities.

Over the past six months, Aberdeenshire Council employees have worked tirelessly with partners and our communities during these difficult times and I am incredibly proud of how we have come together in our response

Due to historical investment in IT systems and flexibility of working practices adopted in previous years, technology enabled many staff – office and school based – to continue to provide services with flexibility. We were also one of the only Councils in Scotland able to sustain democratic decision-making, immediately shifting from physical to virtual committee and Council meetings.

Collaboration between Council services and the huge efforts of our communities ensured sustained delivery of critical frontline services during lockdown, including support for those who needed it the most. This is something that we can all be very proud of and is the hallmark of Aberdeenshire.

The pandemic has required us to further consider how we deliver our services and we have adjusted and adapted our approaches to respond to demand, with an emphasis on collaborative partnership working and with a renewed focus on local issues. New strategic priorities were agreed by our Councillors in July 2020 and we are now developing our Service Plans capitalising on the approach, resilience and enthusiasm demonstrated since March 2020.

Although none of us can predict what the future holds, there are inevitable changes to come. I am confident that our employees will utilise the resilience and enthusiasm shown over the last six months to embed the new plan with a renewed commitment to residents and communities.

Jim Savege
Chief Executive

Aberdeenshire - From mountain to sea, the very best of Scotland

Aberdeenshire Council serves more than 260,000 residents, by delivering high quality services, spending money wisely and planning services that will sustain our communities both now, during these challenging times, and in the future.

Whilst the immediate landscape is uncertain Aberdeenshire Council remains well-placed to respond to the challenges.

There are many factors which will influence how we, as an organisation, respond to the current circumstances – and our economy is central to this. Aberdeenshire's economy, like others, has been hard hit by the pandemic, with the implications of Brexit still to be determined, an economy still heavily reliant on the energy sector and a strong focus on tourism and hospitality.

Despite fluctuating oil prices resulting in significant job losses, adversely affecting the local housing market and hospitality industry, the area has consistently experienced above average rates of population growth, business growth and enterprise growth compared to most major regions. The strength of public and private sector partnerships is a major strength for the region.

Aberdeenshire Council is committed to making the region more attractive to visitors and investors, as well as current and prospective residents. This entails, among other things, continuing to improve infrastructure (roads and bridges, digital, transport and housing), and ensuring future skills requirements are met in an age of increasing automation. Aberdeenshire Council was the first in Scotland to develop and approve a Carbon Budget, underpinning its commitment to tackling climate change, and has recently agreed a circular economy commitment.

The impact of Covid-19 on our budget and services

Aberdeenshire Council is a large organisation, with 16,000 employees and delivering hundreds of local services for the benefit of our communities. Our services include nursery, primary and secondary education, health and social care services, maintaining roads and transport, waste and street cleaning, housing, business support, libraries and leisure services to name a few.

COVID-19 has had an unprecedented impact on Council budgets which will be felt for years.

By September 2020 we have £13.1 million less than we should have at that point in the year, through lost income, unexpected costs and savings we can't deliver. This could result in a gap of up to £30 million for this year.

During the pandemic, the majority of our services have continued, albeit with new working arrangements to keep our staff and communities safe. Whilst managing our usual activities, we supported key workers with childcare, provided assistance to those in greatest need through food and medicine deliveries, provided funding for community groups and awarded millions in business support grants. All this was done to protect and support our business and communities in line with public health advice.

Strategic Focus

The Council does not work alone in its vision to support the communities and businesses of Aberdeenshire. It is part of a robust network of partners that collectively work towards the Community Planning Partnership vision to achieve the 'best quality of life for everyone in Aberdeenshire'.

The work of the Council is central to this partnership and our new priorities will provide renewed focus, ambition and drive to improve outcomes for our communities.

How we deliver our daily business and serve our communities is grounded fundamentally in being an efficient and ethical organisation. We are entrusted with spending public money in the best way possible and this comes with significant responsibilities – **to work together with our communities to achieve agreed outcomes, to spend money wisely, to uphold values of equity and fairness, to minimise our impact on the environment, to protect those most vulnerable in our communities and keep them safe from harm and to work in partnership with others.**

The Council's new strategic priorities were identified through political direction and an evidence-based approach - articulated in the full [Aberdeenshire Strategic Assessment 2020/21](#) and agreed by Full Council in July 2020.

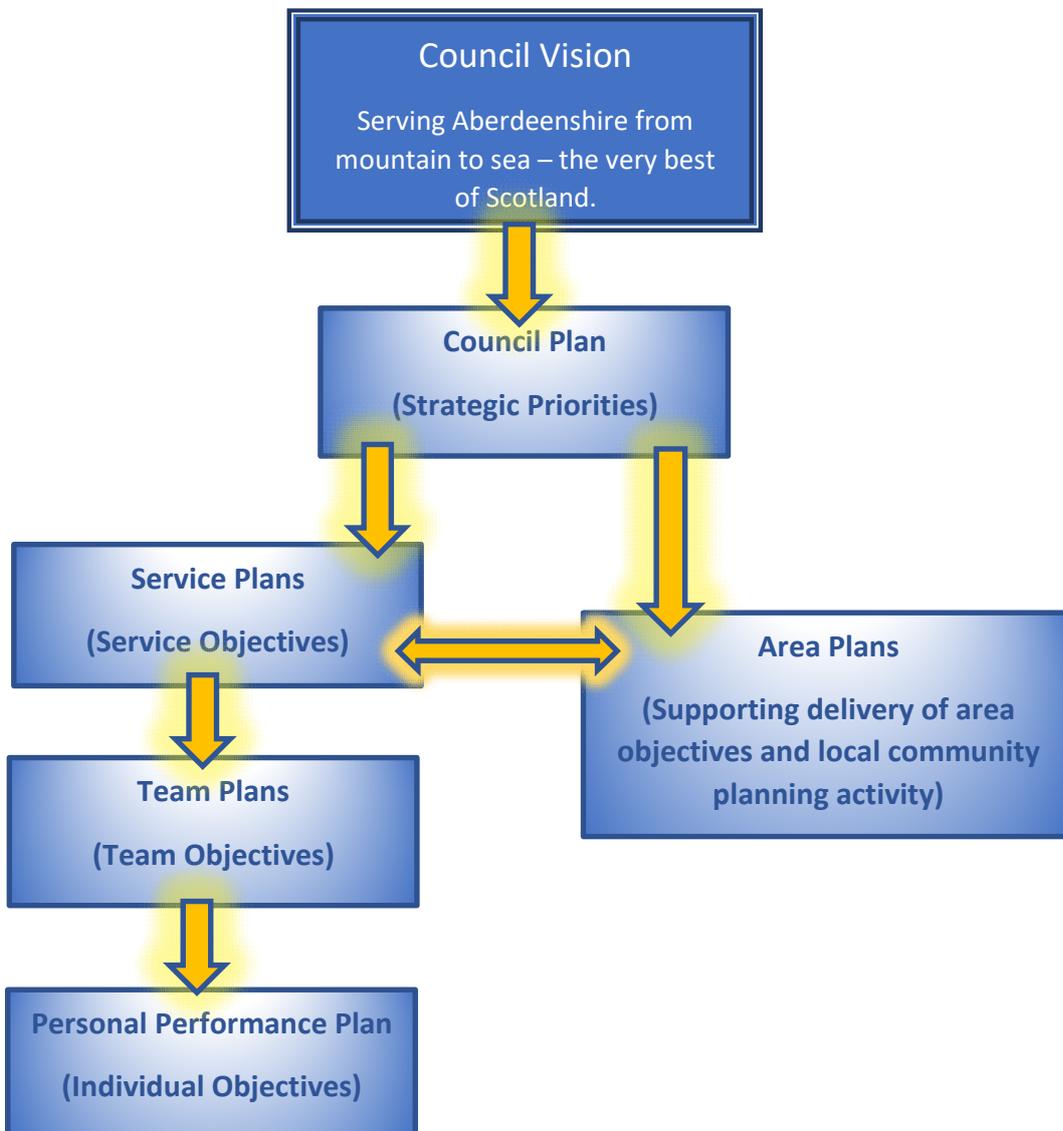
In addition to identifying what our Council priorities should be, community impact assessments are being undertaken to identify the effect covid-19 has had on individual communities in Aberdeenshire and to assist with future planning.

Strategic framework

This framework ensures that all Council plans and strategies are focused on the delivery of a single shared vision for Aberdeenshire and our services.

It supports the overarching [framework for Scotland](#) and the vision for the [Aberdeenshire Community Planning Partnership](#).

The framework is critical in ensuring activity is co-ordinated via a ‘golden thread’ providing a clear direction and linking individual staff objectives through to team and service plans, and into the Council Plan. A performance framework will support this activity to provide assurance that progress is being made in delivering the outcomes.



- **Aberdeenshire Vision** – sets out the long-term vision for Aberdeenshire, shared by the Council, its partners and our citizens
- **Council plan** – this document, describing how the Council will achieve its vision and setting out the aims and outcomes that drive our work
- **Service plans** – describing the contribution of each Council directorate to the delivery of our Council plan outcomes, our change and service improvement priorities
- **Area plans** - describing how our Council plan and community planning outcomes, change and improvement will be approached in each area
- **Team plans** – specific actions to support delivery of the service plans by each team
- **Personal performance plans** – links individual work plans to the Council priorities so that individuals can identify how they are contributing to the delivery of the priorities

Strategic priorities

The Council has significant work to address the impacts on our communities and businesses facing us today, from Covid-19, Brexit, the economic crisis and climate change. The budgetary impact on the Council and, therefore, in turn to the communities we serve is one we must respond to through decisive action.

Our new strategic priorities better reflect the current challenges being faced by the Council and inform the new Medium-Term Financial Strategy in order to address what we know will be a significant financial shortfall as a direct result of this pandemic.

We believe that the strategic priorities set out here provide Aberdeenshire Council with the best chance of meeting our ambitions over the next two years.



The six strategic priorities sit under three pillars which are: Our People, Our Environment, Our Economy.

The priorities under Our People are Education and Health and Wellbeing.

The priorities under Our Environment are Infrastructure and Resilient Communities.

The priorities under Our Economy are Economy and Enterprise and Estate Modernisation.

Underpinning the Priorities are a number of key principles. They are: right people, right places, right time; responsible finances; climate and sustainability; Community Planning Partnership Local Outcome Improvement Plans; human rights and public protection; tackling poverty and inequalities; digital infrastructure and economy.

How are we going to do things differently?

This is a renewal plan for Aberdeenshire; the focus is on exploring how we plan to do things differently, working alongside communities, to ensure we continue to deliver high quality services.

The priorities will inform our Medium-Term Financial Strategy and Carbon Budget, helping us to focus resources where the need is greatest. It will set out how services will adapt to work within the budget available, and what services can reduce or stop altogether.

In order to do things differently, we will:

Focus on... digital: digital technologies have been fundamental to the business continuity of the Council in our response to Covid. Digital is a primary focus for the Council in delivering the new priorities and we are actively looking at how we can channel technologies to improve our business, enable economic growth, support the environment and benefit residents while at the same time ensuring that no one is left behind.

Focus on... working towards full cost recovery: the financial challenges faced by the Council have been inflamed by Covid forcing us to actively consider and review our charging policy. In order to present a balanced budget the Council will work towards full cost recovery - ensuring that we recoup the cost of the service we are delivering wherever possible.

Focus on... commercialisation: we need to protect our valuable frontline services and ensure positive outcomes for local communities. To do this we are working innovatively to develop a more commercial approach to our activities.

Focus on... communities: we need to explore new ways of working with our communities to deliver on local priorities.

Focus on... services not buildings: the range of issues faced by the Council requires us to develop new models for service delivery, often in conjunction with our partners and utilising new technologies. In order to maintain those vital services which address the needs of the most vulnerable in our communities, we will move to self-service coupled with building personal and community resilience.

Focus on... climate change, green renewal and circular economy: we need to protect our valuable natural resources and facilitate growth of the green economy by developing spatial and economic strategies that promote sustainable growth without contributing to the effects of climate change in Aberdeenshire.

Delivering our Priorities across services

Over the next few years, we will sharpen the focus on our Priorities. Services are likely to look very different to how they are now, and we will have to take significant cost out of the organisation in order to deliver our Medium-Term Financial Strategy and continue to balance the books.

In order to do this, we have set out how we will support the delivery of our priorities and what we'll be focusing on in the future. This will be supported by a monitoring and evaluation framework.

Strategic Priority	Council Priority
Education Health & wellbeing Economy & enterprise	To secure continuous improvement in outcomes for ALL children and young people
Education Health & wellbeing Resilient communities	To have better, integrated working arrangements in pursuit of improved outcomes for children and young people
Education Estate modernisation Health and wellbeing Economy and enterprise	Efficient and effective business support, advice and regulation
Resilient communities	Effective delivery of the Council's priorities through a programme of digital innovation and web based services
Health & wellbeing	Our workforce plans are sustainable, affordable and supports employee wellbeing
Economy & enterprise	Income is maximised through reducing costs alongside commercialisation
Estate modernisation	We have an estate that is sustainable, efficient and fit for purpose
Health and Wellbeing Resilient communities	To protect and support public health, community mental and physical health and build community resilience as we adapt to live with Covid-19
Health & wellbeing Resilient communities	Open spaces that encourage active, healthy lifestyles
Infrastructure Health & wellbeing Resilient communities	A road and street-lighting network which keeps people safe, encourages active lifestyles and increases active travel opportunities
Infrastructure Resilient communities	Ensuring that residents and business across Aberdeenshire are prepared to adapt to effects of climate change including the risk of flooding
Infrastructure Health & wellbeing	Waste and recycling service which supports our attractive environment and reduces emissions
Infrastructure Economy & enterprise	Keeping communities connected through the provision of an affordable, reliable and well-connected passenger transport service
Infrastructure Health & wellbeing	It's easy and safe to move around local areas using good-quality active travel routes, streets and roads
Infrastructure Economy & enterprise	Safeguard the built and natural environment
Resilient communities Economy & enterprise	Placemaking to meet the current and future needs of communities through Participatory Budgeting and Asset

	Transfer and other ways of supporting communities to help themselves, enabling community wealth building that supports local economic opportunities
Resilient communities Economy & enterprise	A location of choice that has a diverse economic base of innovative companies with a skilled workforce and return to full employment
Resilient communities Economy and enterprise	The gap between economic, environmental and social outcomes in Banff, Macduff, Fraserburgh and Peterhead and the Aberdeenshire average is closed and other towns at risk have avoided becoming regeneration priorities
Economy & enterprise	Supporting Aberdeenshire businesses through pandemic, Brexit and energy transition
Health and wellbeing Resilient communities Economy and enterprise	Consumers are assured that businesses are conforming to regulations. Businesses are supported to ensure compliance with legislation, economic diversification and energy transition
Health and wellbeing Resilient communities	Develop existing partnerships and build new ones with our key stakeholders
Health and wellbeing Resilient communities	Community-based services are delivered in health & social care
Health and wellbeing Resilient communities	Person-centred care is delivered in a sustainable way
Health and wellbeing Resilient communities	Appropriate support is provided for those who are facing homelessness
Health and wellbeing Resilient communities	Everyone having access to appropriate accommodation and housing support where required
Health and wellbeing Resilient communities	Tenancies are sustained/community capacity building Communities feel empowered and enabled
Education Health and wellbeing Resilient communities Estate modernisation	People are supported to live healthy active lifestyles focused on Live Life Outdoors, Live Life Well and Live Life @ home