

## COUNCIL PLAN 2020–25

### Q1 PROGRESS UPDATE

#### PRIORITY – TACKLING THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND CREATING A GREENER DISTRICT

The climate crisis remains a significant, long term challenge to all of us in the coming years and decades. Winchester has committed to tackling the crisis in order to hand our district to our children and grandchildren in a better state than it is now. The impact of COVID-19 presents an opportunity to foster behaviour change in our society that will help us to do this

#### **What we want to achieve**

- Winchester City Council to be carbon neutral by 2024
- The Winchester district to be carbon neutral by 2030
- Reduced levels of waste and increased recycling, exceeding national targets
- An increase in the proportion of journeys taken by walking, cycling and public transport

#### **Over the last quarter we have achieved the following**

- **Carbon neutrality to be made central to everything we do**

*Commencement of a contract for the council's operational buildings to be supplied by electricity provided from sustainable sources, including wind and solar power, from the 1st April 2020. This will have the immediate impact of reducing our carbon emissions by 19% with the long term aim of further reducing our carbon emissions by 40% if we can 'on-board' all of our sites onto our new green tariff.*

*Large scale move to home working for staff in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and measures such as video conferencing adopted to make this approach sustainable for the future.*

*Work started on a major new flood defence for Winchester at Durngate to provide three new sluice gates on the remaining uncontrolled channels of River Itchen to help to protect the city centre, homes and businesses from high water levels. A highlight report for this project is included at Appendix 3.*

*Over 500 trees planted during 2019/20 (target 100 trees per annum) and work will commence soon on developing a programme for 2020/21.*

*A highlight report for the Carbon Neutral programme is included at Appendix 3. This is the first time that the programme has reported in this format and more detail will be added over the next quarter.*

- **Have an adopted and up to date Local Plan with positive policies which promote low carbon development and transport while protecting our heritage and natural environment**

*Work had been progressing on the new Local Plan in accordance with the timetable in the council's adopted Local Development Scheme. This included finalising the evidence base. A Strategic Issues and Options document (formerly referred to as the "Prospectus"), was going to include how the council's climate change declaration had been fully woven into the heart of the Local Plan. This document was due to be considered by Cabinet on the 18<sup>th</sup> August with consultation planned for the autumn.*

*However, the government has recently consulted on a number of radical changes to the planning system and a decision was taken to pause work on the Local Plan in order to fully understand the implications of these changes on the Local Plan.*

- **Take a lead with partners and residents to deliver the Carbon Neutrality Action Plan throughout the district**

*Installation of 849 square metres of photovoltaic (PV) panels on the Winchester Sport & Leisure Centre that can generate at least 140,000 kilowatts of green energy a year and feed energy back into the grid if excess power is generated.*

- **Deliver the City of Winchester Movement Strategy, refresh the air quality management action plan and prioritise walking, cycling and public transport throughout the district**

*A highlight report for this programme is included at Appendix 3. This is the first time that the programme has reported in this format and more detail will be added over the next quarter.*

- **Work with other public authorities to expand the range of materials we recycle**

*Winchester is working through the Project Integra partnership to review options for a single MRF in Eastleigh and is looking at the option of moving to a twin stream or kerbside sort system to greatly increase the range of material being collected.*

*We are also working with Project Integra to understand the impact of introduction of food waste recycling which is governments preferred direction of travel by 2023 for every local authority.*

- **Safeguard our district's extensive natural habitats and precious ecosystems by delivering the actions in our Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP)**

*Production of the BAP has started, and the draft document will be presented to the Health & Environment Policy Committee on 30 Sep 2020 and Cabinet in December 2020. In addition, a number of engagement activities will be undertaken to help inform the final document.*

## **PRIORITY – LIVING WELL**

We want all our residents to live healthy and fulfilled lives. We recognise that our residents are living longer and want to ensure the district offers the right mix of facilities for all ages and abilities.

### **What we want to achieve**

- Reduced health inequalities
- Increase in physical and cultural activities
- An increase in active travel
- Services that work for all, but especially for residents who need more help to live well
- Attractive and well used green spaces with space for relaxation and play

### **Over the last quarter we have achieved the following**

- **Focus our activities on the most disadvantaged areas, communities and groups**

*Local response centre (LRC) set up as part of countywide network to handle COVID-19 related requests for assistance which require local intervention. Links established with voluntary sector organisations to provide many of the services required. Widespread community network of support published online and status of other key services for vulnerable people, such as the food banks and Citizens Advice monitored and supported where required.*

*Health and welfare calls made to over 900 general need tenants identified as vulnerable and potentially in need of extra support, with those tenants identified as vulnerable receiving a daily call.*

*We have continued to issue grant support to key voluntary sector organisations supporting our more vulnerable residents, such as Citizens Advice Winchester District, Trinity, Winchester Nightshelter, Home-Start, Winchester Live at Home scheme and Winchester Young Carers.*

- **Opening of the new Winchester Sport and Leisure Park to offer sustainable, accessible facilities for all to enjoy a wide range of activities**

*See project highlight report at Appendix 3.*

- **Supporting communities to extend the range of sports facilities across the district**

*Discussions continue with the developer over the specification and design of a cricket pavilion for the West of Waterlooville development.*

- **Create safe cycle ways and pathways to make it safer and more appealing for our residents to cycle and walk to their destination**

*A local cycling and walking improvement plan for Winchester is being developed as part of the Winchester Movement Strategy. The Parking and Access Strategy delivery will consider the needs of the market towns. Meetings are underway to discuss these with representative groups.*

*Also see project highlight report at Appendix 3.*

- **Maintain and enhance the open spaces and parks that support good mental and physical health for residents of all ages**

*Play areas were closed due to COVID-19 but following Government relaxations of lockdown restrictions all facilities re-opened on 4 July with appropriate signage, social distancing and other measures in place to help keep the public safe. Most greenspaces remained open to the public but further steps, like introducing a one-way system in Abbey Gardens, have been taken in line with national guidance to manage pressure on heavily used areas.*

*Some projects have continued throughout lockdown including the creation of a new area called Badgers Patch in Stanmore and changes to Marnhull Rise, as well as work on the replacement of the North Walls Cricket Pavilion and the renovations to Chilcomb Pavilion. It is still expected that the renovation programme for play areas for 2020/21 will be delivered despite the delays due to the pandemic. However, delivery will depend on work pressures surrounding the pandemic and other factors such as contractor availability.*

## **PRIORITY - HOMES FOR ALL**

Housing in our district is expensive and young people and families are moving out because they can't find suitable accommodation they can afford.

Winchester district needs homes for all – homes that are affordable and built in the right areas for our changing communities

### **What we want to achieve.**

- More young people and families working and living in the district.
- All homes are energy efficient and affordable to run
- The creation of communities not just homes
- No-one sleeping rough except by choice

### **Over the last quarter we have achieved the following**

- **The council building significantly more homes, both traditional council homes and through the council housing company**

*There are currently 121 new homes under construction across four sites. Plans are progressing through the appointment of Wates contractors to build 75 new homes at Winnall, a proportion of which may be transferred to the council's housing company. There were no new starts or completions during the first quarter of 2020/21.*

*A highlight report for the New Homes programme is included at Appendix 3.*

- **Strengthen our Local Plan to ensure homes are built for all sectors of our society including young people**
- *A Strategic Housing Market Assessment has been completed and this information will be used to inform the housing policies in the new Local Plan. The government is consulting on a number of proposed changes to the planning system which include significantly increasing the number of homes that would be built in the district. These proposals are currently being assessed and will be the subject of cabinet reports at the end September and the middle of October.*
- **Use the new Winchester Housing Company to deliver a wide range of housing tenures to meet local needs**

*The company has limited resources and as such seeks to minimise its drawdown of capital funding through leasing assets from the Housing Revenue Account and the General Fund, potentially acquiring properties from the market place. The company business plan is progressing to be in a position to lease 5 properties per year which could include a block of flats as one transfer. This would provide housing that will become income generating whilst at the same time offer social advantages for a need not met elsewhere such as homes for keyworkers and young professionals.*

*Since the last performance report we have now confirmed the legal position on leasing and commissioned lease valuations on prospective identified opportunities. We now need to financially evaluate these to ensure leasing properties is a viable route for the company to develop.*

- **Provide support for our homeless and most vulnerable people**

*In response to the governments directive to 'Get Everyone In' at the end of the last quarter, to protect those sleeping rough or at risk of sleeping rough and considered to be most vulnerable from Covid-19, a 10 bed project was secured with 10 individuals accommodated.*

*A further number of individuals were accommodated at a local hotel and all those individuals accommodated received food, healthcare and support from the outreach services to maintain their accommodation and support the individuals to not return to rough sleeping. In total 32 individuals were accommodated during Qtr 1 with 14 moving on to long term housing options during the period, with transition planning development underway for the remaining individuals.*

- **Be innovative in moving the energy efficiency of new and existing homes towards zero carbon**

*Pre-application work with Development Management completed in respect of Passive House Pilot project at Micheldever. A virtual consultation event took place on 14 August 2020, with 18 attendees.*

*An officer presentation on scoping work of the housing stock retrofit £1m per year /£10.7m programme will be given to the Business and Housing Policy Committee in September. A pilot retrofit works on Swedish timber frame non-traditional properties will look at worst performing / hardest to treat properties. Review of the pilot scheme will inform what retrofit work we do with the other similar properties. We are completing bids for funding as they arise such as professional fees and/or capital works i.e. clean heat grants.*

- **Work with developers to ensure that they provide affordable housing and homes at fair market value as part of new developments**

*Discussions are on-going with Cala Homes regarding an affordable extra care scheme at Kings Barton.*

## **PRIORITY - VIBRANT LOCAL ECONOMY**

Winchester district is home to a host of successful businesses and enterprises with high levels of employment in our urban and rural areas. In the face of tough competition, our high streets, town and business centres must attract new investment in low carbon offices, workspace and transport links

What we want to achieve

- Grow opportunities for high-quality, well-paid employment across the district
- New offices and workspace are located in areas with sustainable transport links or where they reduce the need to travel to work
- More younger people choose to live and work here
- Businesses grasp opportunities for green growth
- The city, market towns and rural communities across our district have a compelling and competitive visitor offer

**Over the last quarter we have achieved the following:-**

- **Working with business, universities and colleges to position Winchester district as a centre for digital, creative, knowledge-intensive networks**

*An EDRF funding bid has been submitted for a Digital Growth Factory including commercialisation courses, acceleration support, incubation and scale up support for digital businesses. Following a successful expression of interest round a full application has now been made. Decisions on applications have been delayed due to the impact of COVID-19 but it is anticipated that we will have confirmation by the end of the year.*

*Sponsorship of the Winchester Business Excellence Awards Digital Innovation category with Winchester BID is ongoing. The deadline for applications was 31 July. PR support through business e-news undertaken. Award ceremony planned for October.*

*Due to COVID-19 the Winchester Design Festival is postponed to February 2021. This festival benefitted from a one off project funding approval to support a programme which excites and inspires young people about how design can accelerate business growth and increase employability; and promote Winchester to the world as an innovative city. Discussions with the festival organisers are ongoing.*

*A monthly edition of Arts News has been produced aimed at the arts, culture and creative sectors providing up to date advice and support throughout this period.*

*Face to face meetings as part of the Cultural Network Group have been postponed. Future virtual meetings have been planned in addition to ongoing direct engagement with key stakeholders in the arts community.*



*The redevelopment of central Winchester prioritises the needs of younger people and work continues on the development framework and delivery strategy for the area. Work to explore how Kingswalk could be developed into vibrant creative hub to support small businesses, the arts and opportunities for young people continues.*

*A highlight report for this project is included at Appendix 3.*

- **Grow opportunities for high-quality, well paid employment across the district**

*Following the COVID-19 lockdown, we led on a Back to Business campaign working with Environmental Health and Corporate Communications Teams to support business re-opening. This included 2 editions of a Back to Business pack, social media activity and regular economy and tourism B2B e-newsletters.*

*Set up a business support help line to provide advice to businesses about support measures available and guidance around re-opening*

*Dedicated business support pages developed and regularly updated along with a series of business e-bulletins helping businesses keep abreast of changing guidance and support measures available*

*Represented Winchester's local economy at weekly meetings with EM3, BIDs and Economic Development teams across the county and wider EM3 region, sharing opportunities, best practice and COVID-19 related recovery plans.*

*Led on the mobilisation of the Discretionary Grant Programme from central government to support small businesses impacted by COVID-19 who were not eligible for other grants. 293 applications from businesses received in the first application window. To date £1,076,750 has been dispatched to over 180 successful business applicants. Total fund value of £1,482,500 is available. A second application window will open in early August to mobilise the as much of the remaining £405,750 as possible, with all payments processed by end of August.*

- **Strengthening the Winchester brand and working in partnership to promote and develop our unique cultural, heritage and natural environment assets**

*Following the commissioning of a local film company with expertise in tourism films to develop a series of promotional destination films, storyboards have been developed and filming has commenced. Whilst COVID-19 has delayed progress the opportunity has been taken to create a specific film aimed to inspire consumer confidence and influence local spending. This will be ready mid-August.*

*Work with Discover Winchester partners and Rocket Launch PR whilst affected by COVID-19, planning around collaborative marketing and shared messages as part of restore and rebuild activity has taken place along with a*

*virtual meeting on 9 July. Partners have not been in a position to make their renewal payments which remains under review.*

*Launched Dream Now, Travel Later campaign in response to restrictions on travel. Virtual Winchester was developed which promoted virtual activities and experiences on offer to maintain engagement whilst on lockdown and to inspire people to plan a trip to Winchester in the future. Promoted across all digital platforms, five B2C e-news, website and social media platforms.*

*Regular B2B e-newsletters kept businesses in the visitor economy updated regarding business support, national and regional initiatives alongside VisitWinchester updates.*

*Maintained engagement with the visitor attractions sector via virtual group meetings sharing advice, experience, intelligence and recovery plans.*

*Represented Winchester's visitor economy at bi-weekly Visit England/Visit Britain/Tourism South East meetings. Meetings undertaken with our taskforce contact at VB/VE and participation in the slack community – designed to share best practice, collaborate with other destinations across the UK.*

- **Supporting business in meeting the challenge of carbon neutrality**

*Sustainable Business Network has moved to a virtual platform.*

*Virtual meetings held with large businesses to help them reduce their carbon emissions. Four businesses are working with the council on introducing solar panels to reduce their energy costs and help generate green electricity.*

*Virtual climate conference has been planned to be held in August 2020 to review the council's progress against the climate action plan and advise businesses on forthcoming plans for next year.*

- **Securing support to replace LEADER funding and sustain business development in rural areas.**

*Completed and submitted the annual LEADER Attestation report to the Rural Payments Agency.*

## **YOUR SERVICES, YOUR VOICE**

Throughout the outbreak of COVID-19, the council has continued to deliver high quality services and track the performance of our remote working teams in relation to customer response and service delivery. The pandemic has fast tracked developments around digital delivery and the streamlining of processes, creating improvements to efficiency and accessibility of services residents, tenants, visitors, businesses and non-profit organisations across our district in restricted and sometimes difficult circumstances. Our commitment to ensuring residents are able to make their voice heard and be able to see and understand how the council makes its decisions has been upheld by the introduction of virtual committee meetings with special arrangements and new protocols around public participation.

### **What we want to achieve?**

- An open and transparent council
- Improving satisfaction for our services
- Good value compared to other similar authorities
- Continuous improvement in cost-effectiveness
- High accessibility and usage of our services
- Constructive and effective partnerships across the district
- A balanced budget and stable council finances

### **Over the last quarter we have achieved the following**

- **New processes that involve the public, businesses, stakeholders and ward councillors earlier and more deeply in the design and decision making process**

*A new approach to engagement is being coordinated by the Corporate Head of Strategic Support to ensure that public participation around developments to the district can take place in a new format, and not lose the interaction that is needed to meaningfully engage due to restrictions around social distancing. The Head of Engagement and Head of Programme for Central Winchester Regeneration are working on separate engagement 'events' that benefit from new technology and recently enhanced techniques around virtual meetings and conferences/webinars and these will be used as 'test of concepts' to assist with defining the best course of action going forward.*

- **New processes that effectively respond to and use complaints and feedback to drive service improvement**

*We have reviewed the current complaints procedures and updated the corporate Customer Complaints Policy. This is due to be introduced in the autumn and will be supported by a communications campaign and a training programme for new starters and staff who regularly manage and respond to customer complaints.*

- **New wider set of published measures designed to drive improved satisfaction and performance**

*A new performance management area for the website is under development which will enable the council to publish regular updates against the performance indicators.*

- **More effective use of technology to make it simpler and easier to deal with the council and its delivery partners while reducing cost**

*The outbreak of COVID-19 has driven forward the agenda in terms of digitalisation of services, seeing high volume services switch to online and phone service delivery as default, in the absence of opportunity to have face-to-face meetings.*

*We have introduced bookable appointments in reception through a variety of methods including virtual video meetings via a terminal in reception and meetings by a phone provided in reception. Initially, this is for critical services only that relate to customer wellbeing.*

*A new on-line system has been introduced for residential parking zone permits.*

- **Strong focus on accessibility standards to ensure our services are usable by all**

*The commitment to accessibility has been upheld during the response to the pandemic. All signage produced complies with good practice around legibility, and the language and tone of communications has been adapted in order to ensure we are inclusive and our messages are framed clearly to reach the broadest possible audience.*

*Work is underway in IT to ensure the website complies with the latest standards in accessibility.*

- **Investing in our staff and making the most of their skills and talents**

*The COVID-19 response from the council afforded the organisation an opportunity to encourage staff to play to their skills in supporting us with our emergency response and maintaining resilience. Colleagues were able to flag their availability for redeployment and work is a cross cutting way to deliver new services such as the Local Response Centre – which was established and active within 48 hours using redeployed staff from Customer Reception, Sport management, Transformation, Housing and Council Tax and Benefits.*