
REPORT OF THE CABINET

The Cabinet met on 16 July and 26 September 2024. Attendees: -

Councillor Glazier (Chair) (2)
Councillors Bennett (2), Bowdler (2), Penny Di Cara (2), Claire Dowling (2), Maynard (1), and Standley (2).

1. Council Monitoring Q1 2024/25

1.1 The Cabinet has considered a report on the Council's position and year-end projections for the Council Plan targets, Revenue Budget, Capital Programme, and Savings Plan, together with Risks at the end of June 2024.

1.2 Broad progress against the Council's four strategic priority outcomes is summarised from paragraph 1.10 and an overview of finance and performance data is provided in the Corporate Summary at Appendix 1. Strategic risks are reported at Appendix 8.

Carry over report for Council Plan 2023/24

1.3 Outturns are now available for the 7 Council Plan measures for 2023/24, which were carried over from quarter 4. Measures are carried over when action has been completed but outturn data is not available for reporting at year-end. Outturns for these measures are provided in Appendix 3 Adult Social Care and Health and Appendix 4 Business Services Department. Overall, 71% of targets (41 of the 58 Council Plan measures) for 2023/24 were met or exceeded.

Council Plan 2024/25 amendments and variations

1.4 The Council Plan 2024/25 and the Portfolio Plans 2024/25 – 2026/27 have been updated with available 2023/24 outturns and final performance measure targets. All plans are published on the Council's website. The Corporate Summary (Appendix 1) contains a forecast of performance against targets.

1.5 The Strategic Risk Register, Appendix 8, was reviewed and updated to reflect the Council's risk profile. The 'Care Act reviews and Deprivation of Liberty Safeguarding (DoLS) assessments' risk has been included as a new risk to the Strategic Risk Register. Risk 1 (Roads) and Risk 4 (Health) have updated risk definition and risk controls. Risk 5 (Reconciling Policy, Performance and Resources) and Risk 8 (Capital Programme) have updated risk definitions. Risk 6 (Local Economic Growth), Risk 9 (Workforce), Risk 12 (Cyber Attack), Risk 15 (Climate) and Risk 20 (Placements for Children and Young People in Our Care) have updated risk controls.

Budget Outturn

1.6 The detailed revenue projections for each department are set out in the relevant appendices which show an aggregate total overspend of £23.4m. All departments are overspending, reflecting the difficult financial situation that the Council, along with many others, face. The main headlines are:

- Children's Services (CSD) is forecast to overspend by £12.5m; the main areas of projected overspend being Early Help and Social Care and Home to School Transport. The Early Help and Social Care overspend of £7.4m is due in the main to pressures around agency

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placements and Children's Homes within Looked After Children, and staffing costs within Localities. Home to School Transport has a forecast overspend of £4.8m due to growth in numbers of pupils and unit costs for transport that have far outstripped what was estimated during the budget setting process. Proposals for cost avoidance are being developed by Communities, Economy and Transport and CSD.

- The forecast overspend for Adult Social Care is £9.8m which largely relates to the Independent Sector, where the overspend is forecast to be £10.3m. This is due to a combination of factors, primarily being increasing complexity of need and pressures arising from demand and demographic growth returning to pre-pandemic levels. Mitigations to manage the overspend down include improving income collection and reviewing high-cost packages to ensure care is at the appropriate level for clients. There is a forecast underspend in Directly Provided Services of £0.5m due to staffing vacancies which reflects the difficulties in recruitment.
- Communities, Economy and Transport is showing a forecast overspend of £0.2m. The largest overspend is in Highways where the cost of electricity for streetlighting and depots is much higher than budgeted.
- There is a forecast overspend of £0.7m for Business Services, mainly in Property Services, as a result of increased accommodation and reactive maintenance costs.
- Governance Services is expected to overspend by £0.2m; mostly in Legal Services due to the cost of locum cover for staff vacancies and maternity leave.

1.7 Within Centrally Held Budgets (CHB), including Treasury Management (TM), and corporate funding there is an underspend of £14.0m, which includes the general contingency:

- There is currently an estimated £1.6m underspend on TM, based on a robust investment strategy approach and slippage on the capital programme reducing the need to borrow in 2024/25. It should be noted that there has been a fall in cash investment balances; whilst above benchmark returns are being achieved, the level of balances has fallen by 29% in one year to £213.7m at the end of June 2024.
- Within CHB the forecast underspend of £6.5m is due to the General Contingency of £5.3m, and £1.3m available from not transferring this contribution to the Capital Programme.
- Corporate Funding budgets are underspending by £5.9m, due to the additional allocations of Social Care Services Grants totalling £5.4m, approved by Cabinet on 25 June 2024, plus an additional £0.5m received for business rates 2023/24 pooling and reliefs.

1.8 The net impact of the above is an unplanned draw from the financial management reserve of £9.4m in 2024/25. This is in addition to the planned £14.3m draw to present a balanced position in setting the 2024/25 budget. The Council's projected level of strategic reserves was last assessed to be £16.7m as of March 2029. Making this additional draw would reduce this to £7.3m. For comparison, the latest published budget gap after likely funding scenarios for 2025/26 is £26.6m. Any reduction in unallocated reserves reduces the flexibility available in dealing with the challenge of addressing next year's projected deficit and setting a balanced budget, without having to seek further savings. In this context, to address the projected in-year overspend and reduce the required draw from reserves, the Council is taking a number of actions to reduce spending in 2024/25, including:

- Additional controls on purchase orders, including the requirement for orders above £1,000 to be supported by a business case and approved by a reviewing board.
- An updated recruitment protocol, including CMT approval of non-core role recruitment.

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- A review of P-Card expenditure and reset of card spend limits.
- Reviewing proposed savings for 2025/26 to identify whether actions can be brought forward into 2024/25.
- Asking departments to identify any further actions to reduce in-year spend across all budgets.

1.9 Capital Programme net expenditure for the year is projected to be £84.7m (gross £104.7m) against a budget of £84.2m (gross £108.5m), a net variation of £0.5m (gross £3.8m). The main headlines are:

- A slippage risk factor has been applied to the capital programme to reflect likely slippage based on a risk assessment of historic levels of actual expenditure and slippage at a project/programme level. The risk factor will be held at a corporate level to enable services / project managers to manage project budgets at a local level, whilst ensuring greater robustness to the planning and monitoring process at a corporate level.
- Total slippage of £10.7m across a number of projects relating to various project specific factors. The largest areas of slippage include Bridge Assessment and Strengthening (£4.4m), Exceat Bridge Replacement (£2.4m), Eastbourne Town Centre Phase 2a (£1.2m) and the IT&D Strategy Implementation programme (£0.8m).
- Total spend in advance of £6.4m, mainly relating to integrated transport projects that are planned based on a revised programme agreed by Lead Member.
- A net overspend of £0.5m, relating to house adaptations at disabled children's homes where demand is managed through the capital reserve (£0.3m) and Bexhill and Hastings Link Road (£0.2) where project costs remain for post excavation archaeology, landscaping, and compensation.

Progress against Council Priorities

Driving sustainable economic growth

1.10 The Council has spent £349m with 904 local suppliers over the past 12 months. This was 63% of our total spend exceeding our target of 60%. During quarter 1, we have continued to work with suppliers to maximise the social value delivered by our contracts. The benefits seen from these contracts were equal to 13% of the applicable contract values achieved, against a target of 10%. The social value commitments made by suppliers during quarter 1 included apprenticeships, creating jobs for local people and initiatives to reduce carbon emissions (Appendix 4).

1.11 Work on our highways has continued in quarter 1, using the extra funding approved by the Council in recognition of the deterioration of the network following the last prolonged, wet and cold winter. We completed 40 patch repairs across 26 sites in quarter 1. This has had an impact on the condition of the network and has enabled us to carry out works above and beyond our usual programmes. We also delivered 196 drainage schemes. These included replacing gully covers and clearing significant blockages. We completed 68 road improvement schemes in quarter 1, and repaired 7,450 potholes (Appendix 6).

1.12 165 pupils attended Open Doors visits during quarter 1, giving them experience of a workplace. The Careers Hub ran training for schools and colleges in June 2024, with over 50 people attending. The training focused on future skills, the visitor economy, health and social care, construction and the green industries (Appendix 6).

1.13 Council delivered business support programmes have helped to create a number of jobs. The Newhaven Business Grants Programme created 10 full-time equivalent jobs in quarter 1. We expect that the programme will create over 20 full-time equivalent roles (Appendix 6).

Keeping vulnerable people safe

1.14 The rate of Looked After Children has increased in quarter 1 from 655 (61.5 per 10,000) at the end of March 2024, to 684 (66.6 per 10,000) at the end of June 2024. There has been a continued focus on returning children to their families in quarter 1. However, there has also been a significant increase in admissions to care. 67 children were admitted to care in quarter 1, with 38 discharged from care. There was a 6.7% reduction in the number of children with a Child Protection Plan in quarter 1. The figure fell from 688 (64.6 per 10,000) at the end of March 2024, to 642 (62.5 per 10,000) at the end of June 2024 (Appendix 5).

1.15 The Council's Connected Families Intervention Practitioners (CFIP) have continued to provide dedicated support to parents, support families to stay together and improve the wellbeing and life chances of children. In quarter 1, CFIP delivered specialist interventions with 160 Children in Need or Child Protection cases. Since the launch of CFIP in January 2024 there have been a 14% reduction in the number of children with a Child Protection Plan. The average number of Children in Need case closures has also increased by 91%, from 60 per month in early 2024, to 115 per month in May 2024 (Appendix 5).

1.16 In February 2024, the Council agreed to invest an extra £1.7m in our inhouse foster care programme. During quarter 1, the Council introduced a new payment structure for foster carers. The new structure included a commitment for payments to keep pace with the National Minimum Allowance. We are also working with 19 other local authorities in the South East to launch a new regional fostering hub. During quarter 1, there has been a 47% increase in the number of enquiries about becoming a foster carer, when compared to quarter 1 2023/24. 8 new households also became a foster carer, providing 11 new places for vulnerable children (Appendix 5).

1.17 The Lansdowne secure children's home reopened in February 2024. The number of children in the home has increased as staffing numbers have grown, with 4 children resident at the end of quarter 1. The education provision at the home is operating well and delivering a creative and comprehensive curriculum. Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust is commissioned to provide health services at Lansdowne. The Trust has experienced delays in recruitment which has had some impact on which children we have been able to place in Lansdowne. The Trust has recently recruited to critical roles which will support us to meet the needs of a more diverse group from September 2024 (Appendix 5).

1.18 The Supporting Families transformation programme has continued to be a key part of the drive to develop a joined-up whole family, whole system approach to Early Intervention. The number of families Children's Services are working with has continued to increase as they broaden the programme. In quarter 1, 560 families received a family support intervention. There were also 184 successful payments by results claims (Appendix 5).

1.19 During quarter 1 the Safer East Sussex Team, in partnership with colleagues from Trading Standards and Get Safe Online, attended the 999 Event in Eastbourne. The teams helped raise awareness of fraud and scams with hundreds of members of the public, to try and keep vulnerable people safe (Appendix 3).

Helping people help themselves

1.20 We supported 57 carers by short-term crisis intervention in quarter 1. The service relies on receiving referrals either directly from carers or via other organisations. However, we received fewer referrals than usual in quarter 1. The provider is continuing to promote the service, while a review is undertaken to understand whether the level of demand and need has changed (Appendix 3).

1.21 The Tribe app and website, which makes it easier for people to volunteer across the county, has continued to grow. There were over 2,500 listings for volunteer opportunities and activities and 23,000 views by users during quarter 1. The Council and Tribe led a social media campaign during Volunteers Week in June 2024. This campaign led to over 6,000 views of the Youth Justice Services opportunities and the recruitment of 16 new volunteers (Appendix 3).

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1.22 During 2023/24 (reported a quarter in arrears) 2,066 NHS Health Checks were delivered to people in the most deprived communities in East Sussex, against a target of 2,300. We did see the expected increase in Health Checks in a number of areas during 2023/24. However, this didn't occur in the Hasting & St Leonards Primary Care Network area. This area has the highest number of patients from areas ranked among the most deprived in the country (Appendix 3).

Making best use of resources now and for the future

1.23 During quarter 1 the Leader and Chief Executive continued to raise issues and priorities for the county with our local MPs. In June, Cabinet agreed the Council's productivity plan. The plan provided an opportunity to put forward a range of financial, legislative and policy burdens and barriers that Government could reduce or remove. We submitted the plan to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. We also submitted the plan to the Local Government Association to support it in its sector wide lobbying (Appendix 7).

1.24 We completed 6 energy efficiency schemes in quarter 1. These schemes included 1 LED lighting project, 4 Solar PV energy generation projects and 1 heat decarbonisation scheme. The Council is reviewing its capital programme as part of the RPPR process. This review may result in some projects planned for 2024/25 being deferred into later years. Total carbon emissions for 2023/24 (reported a quarter in arrears) saw a 36% reduction compared to the baseline year 2019/20, against a target of 43%. Calculated carbon emissions from the Council's electricity consumption increased during 2023/24. This was despite a fall in the amount of electricity being used. This was due to changes in the carbon emission factor. This is the figure used to convert electricity consumption from the national grid into equivalent carbon emissions. The carbon emission factor for electricity fell by over 24% between 2019/20 and 2022/23 as renewables increasingly replaced coal in the generation mix. However, for 2023/24, this trend reversed, and the carbon emissions factor increased (Appendix 4).

1.25 The Council has continued to work with a range of partners to develop and deliver carbon reduction and climate change adaptation work in quarter 1. This included completing an assessment of county-wide risks and vulnerabilities to climate change. We will use this assessment to inform how adaptation can be integrated into service plans. A salary sacrifice scheme was also implemented to encourage the adoption of electric vehicles by staff. The Council worked with a local farming partnership to secure funding from the Environment Agency's Natural Environment Investment Readiness Fund to enable the partnership to begin to develop local carbon offsets (Appendix 6).

1.26 The quarter 1 sickness absence figure is 2.17 days per Full Time Equivalent employee, an 11.9% increase on the same period in 2023/24. The predominant reason for the increase in absence rates is a rise in days lost due to cold/flu absences (Appendix 4).

1.27 HM Inspectorate of Probation (HMIP) undertook an inspection of the Council's youth justice service in June 2024. The HMIP report gave the service a rating of Good, and recognised the commitment and motivation of the partnership and youth justice service and the work they do to support children, young people and their parents and carers. The report highlighted four areas for improvement, three for the service and one for the Police. An action plan has been developed to address these areas (Appendix 5).

2. East Sussex Local Transport Plan 4 2024-2050

2.1 The Cabinet considered a report on the East Sussex Local Transport Plan 4 (LTPA).

Local Transport Plan Context

2.2 Under the Transport Act 2000, Local Transport Authorities are required to have a Local Transport Plan (LTP) for their geographical area. The overall purpose of this is to set out the strategy and policy framework for transport, alongside enabling the transport, economic,

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social, and environmental challenges, and opportunities to be identified, whilst identifying the transport investment priorities; and establishing how to manage, maintain and improve the transport network.

2.3 The current East Sussex Local Transport Plan 3 (LTP3) was adopted in May 2011 and covers the period 2011 to 2026. It is supported by a series of five-year implementation plans which set out the intentions for transport investment for this period of time.

2.4 The requirement to update LTP3 has been influenced by several major changes in Government policy and priorities at a national, sub-national and local level. These include greater emphasis on the need to decarbonise transport; economic recovery following the Covid 19 pandemic, greater emphasis and integration of health and wellbeing policy, and the need to align with the Transport for the South East's (TfSE) Transport Strategy and Strategic Investment Plan.

2.5 The Department for Transport had initially proposed to issue updated Local Transport Plan guidance to local authorities in spring 2023. However, the publication of the draft guidance was continually delayed and has yet to be published. In lieu of the published draft guidance, DfT continued to urge local authorities to progress the review and update of their LTPs and provided local authorities with a strong indication of the likely contents. Prior to the public and stakeholder consultation, East Sussex County Council (ESCC) officers met with the DfT to discuss our draft LTP4 and they confirmed that the plan aligned with the draft guidance.

2.6 From a transport planning perspective, there has been an increased emphasis on the need to move away from 'planning for vehicles' towards planning for 'people and places', which is referred to as a 'decide and provide' approach. LTP4 has embraced this approach by developing a preferred vision of the future alongside a strategy to work towards the delivery of, whilst enabling the management of uncertainty about the future.

2.7 Importantly this approach provides flexibility. Whilst the preferred vision will stay constant, the strategy and accompanying policies and measures can be adjusted or adapted to manage any uncertainties and changes wider Government policy on transport that arise during the plan period. This is critical when considering, for example, the newly elected government has identified five emerging strategic priorities for transport - rail reform (and the establishment of Great British Railways, which will bring rail infrastructure improvements and the delivery of services together), improving and expanding bus services, transforming infrastructure, making transport greener, and integrating transport networks of active travel measures.

2.8 This approach will enable us to adapt the East Sussex LTP4 strategy and investment plan to take account of any policy changes and the availability of new funding streams that are brought forward over the life of the plan.

Supporting information

2.9 The process to develop LTP4 involves three key project stages:

- Stage 1 - Scoping (Completed – August 2022 - December 2022)
- Stage 2 - Strategy Development (Completed - January 2023 – September 2024)
- Stage 3 - Delivery (October 2024 onwards)

2.10 We are currently in the final phase of Stage 2 and propose to move to Stage 3 subject to LTP4 being adopted. Given the longevity of LTP4 (2024-2050), it will be important that it is treated as a live document. Therefore, the Strategy will continue to be reviewed, updated and monitored periodically to take account of changes in priorities and policies at a national, sub-national and local level as outlined in paragraphs 2.7 and 2.8, and the availability of funding.

Strategy Development (Stage 2) update

2.11 Following the Stage 2 public and stakeholder consultation undertaken between late November 2023 and late February 2024, we have reviewed all of the consultation feedback

received from over 1,000 engagements, developed draft responses to these comments and identified where LTP4 needs updating.

2.12 We have continued to work closely with officers and key external stakeholders on proposed updates to the plan to ensure that the LTP strategy reflects partners emerging strategies and plans (e.g. District and Borough Local Plans, the East Sussex Prosperity Strategy, etc.).

2.13 The LTP4 Member Reference Group, comprising members of the Place Scrutiny Committee, have been engaged throughout the Strategy's development. The proposed updates to the draft final LTP4 were presented to the cross-party Reference Group in late June 2024, and a summary of the final changes in early September 2024 as part of the governance process for LTP4's adoption.

Updates to the LTP and supporting documents following consultation

LTP4 Strategy (Appendix 9)

2.14 In response to the consultation outcomes the following changes to the draft Strategy document have been undertaken:

- relocated and strengthened the reference to the 'decide and provide' approach, as referred to in paragraph 2.6, that is set out in the strategy;
- improved references to inclusive engagement and communication, outlining the critical importance of this from the outset, at the early stages of scheme design through to scheme delivery;
- improved references relating to different non-motorised users (people walking, wheeling and cycling, equestrian users);
- strengthened references regarding the opportunities for travel behaviour change initiatives alongside the delivery of transport infrastructure, subject to the availability of funding;
- improved references to accessing healthcare;
- highlighted that the opportunities for infrastructure and service improvements, specifically for active travel and buses, will be included as part of the review of the Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) and Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP);
- strengthened the references to sustainable development and links to the current review of District and Borough Council's Local Plans;
- reviewed highway maintenance and links to active travel;
- strengthened references to coastal management and flooding and links to transport infrastructure; and
- Strengthened reference to biodiversity net gain and the local nature recovery strategy.

Supporting documents

2.15 In relation to the supporting assessments, the Equalities Impact Assessment has been strengthened with evidence from local residents and protected characteristic groups to enable the use of the LTP4 EqIA by teams developing transport infrastructure measures and services. We are not proposing to make any changes to the Integrated Impact Assessment, Health Impact Assessment and Habitats Impact Assessment as these will be required to be reviewed throughout the delivery of LTP4.

2.16 As outlined in paragraph 2.7 the new government has provided an early indication of their transport priorities. This is alongside other policies which transport will align to, including the development of an industrial strategy and a 10 year infrastructure plan as well as updates to national planning policy to ensure the planning system meets the needs of a modern economy. The draft LTP4 Strategy has been updated to reflect these emerging policy areas, alongside the County's Economic Prosperity Strategy, a link to which can be found [here](#).

LTP4 Investment Plan

2.17 To support the delivery of the LTP4 Strategy the following updates to the draft LTP4 Implementation Plan have been made:

- amended the name from 'Implementation Plan' to 'Investment Plan' to indicate that the plan is largely unfunded, but importantly to demonstrate our ambition particularly to government and other funding providers in relation to the opportunities for scheme delivery as and when funding becomes available. This also aligns with terminology used by Transport for the South East (TfSE) with the 'Strategic Investment Plan' which supports their Transport Strategy. From a public and stakeholder perspective, it will also support with managing expectations on the delivery of the plan, as it will clearly set out the opportunities for scheme delivery subject to either the County Council and/or our partners securing funding;
- highlights that the LTP4 is an aspirational strategy that will be used to secure investment as outlined above (but needs to demonstrate ambition to help secure funding);
- to manage expectations around deliverability of the plan, strengthened references to the availability of funding (especially in the current financial climate) and that the plan is subject to the ability of ESCC internal teams and external partners to work collaboratively to seek and secure external funding;
- strengthened the text focussed on scheme scale (i.e. localised measures or strategic schemes) and likely types of funding that will be required to be secured;
- strengthened explanation of the roles and responsibilities in delivering the plan, with a separate section related to this;
- included new sub section covering engagement and consultation to demonstrate the approaches that may be required to bring schemes forward that align with a stronger policy context relating to the decarbonisation of transport;
- included new sub section on the proposed governance of the LTP4 in terms of the management of the delivery and the continued collaborative engagement with officers and stakeholders who have supported the development of LTP4;
- rename the monitoring and evaluation section to 'measuring success' to potentially include specific indicators to enable the future monitoring of the plan's success. We have not included targets in the plan as the achievement of any such targets is subject to the level of funding being secured and available; and
- expanded the forward timescales of the Investment Plan to indicate short-, medium- and longer-term timescales for the study, develop and deliver stages of schemes identified in the Investment Plan.

2.18 We have also liaised with other local authorities in the south-east to benchmark, learn and understand how others have developed their LTP's Investment Plan's alongside consultants Steer and apply this learning to the development of a robust LTP4 Investment Plan for the county. This benchmarking has helped inform several of the updates reflected above. A copy of the draft final LTP4 Investment Plan is included in Appendix 10.

Document accessibility

2.19 The finalised version of the LTP4 Strategy, Investment Plan and accompanying documents will be accessible and web-based documents available through the East Sussex County Council website. This approach will be applied to all modal strategies developed, where feasible.

Further work

Carbon Assessment of LTP4

2.20 A high level carbon assessment was undertaken as part of the scenario planning exercise used to develop the draft LTP4 strategy. The carbon assessment of the 'preferred future' scenario indicated that there would be a significant contribution towards achieving net zero transport. The Department for Transport's baseline forecasts are for a 50% reduction on

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2019 levels; the East Sussex LTP4 'preferred future' forecast identified a further 19% to 30% reduction on the Department for Transport's forecasts.

2.21 Since then, work has been undertaken by several sub national transport bodies, including TfSE, to develop a Carbon Assessment Tool for local authorities to use to assess the carbon impacts on specific schemes and scheme types in their LTPs and Investment Plan's. The assessment tool was made available in August 2024 for use by local authorities. Officers are now reviewing the Carbon Assessment Playbook, before confirming an approach to the carbon assessment of LTP4. Therefore, a further detailed carbon assessment of the LTP and its specific schemes and scheme types will need to be undertaken after the adoption of LTP4.

LTP4 Scheme Prioritisation Framework

2.22 A framework to assess transport schemes for inclusion in the Council's annual capital programme of local transport improvements was developed as part of LTP3. This scheme prioritisation framework is currently being reviewed and updated to reflect the themes in the LTP4 Strategy. This will be tested over the next 6 to 9 months prior to bringing into effect to inform the development of the 2026/27 capital programme of local transport improvements.

Governance – delivery of LTP4

2.23 As outlined in paragraph 2.10, given the longevity of the plan we are proposing that LTP4 is managed as a live document. Partnership working is a critical approach underpinning the plan as responsibility for the delivery of the LTP rests not just with the County Council but with multiple organisations. It is proposed that the relationships with internal officers and partners established throughout the LTP co-development process will be maintained and enhanced in order to support the ongoing delivery of the plan.

Modal Strategies

2.24 Further work is also being undertaken to either review or develop a series of mode specific strategies supporting the LTP4 which will provide a greater granularity to the policies and schemes included in the plan:

- Rail Strategy – updated draft strategy being finalised with key stakeholders and a public/stakeholder consultation is proposed after local elections in May 2025;
- Freight Strategy – new draft being finalised with key stakeholders and a public/stakeholder consultation is proposed after local elections in May 2025;
- Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) – An update on the BSIP progress was submitted to the Department for Transport in June 2024;
- Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan – Work on updating this strategy will start in September 2024, with a public/stakeholder consultation is anticipated in summer/autumn 2025;
- Electric Vehicle Strategy – A draft strategy was developed to support the recently successful Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) funding application to enable on-street charge points to be delivered in the county.

Adoption of LTP4

2.25 Once the LTP4 has been adopted, we will share a copy of the final plan with DfT.

2.26 Should the government subsequently issue guidance on LTPs, we will review the plan against this guidance and agree with the DfT any identified updates required to our plan.

2.27 Local Transport Authorities are required to have a Local Transport Plan (LTP) in place which sets the strategy and policy framework for transport across their geography. The East Sussex LTP4, which will cover the period 2024 to 2050, will ensure that we have an up-to-date LTP that is reflective of current national, sub national and local policy, which will place us in a stronger position to seek future funding.

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2.28 Over the last two years, significant progress has been made in developing, consulting upon and finalising a robust transport strategy for the county which, following the outcomes of stakeholder engagement and public consultation undertaken between 27 November 2023 and 25 February 2024, for the most part has been supported. The changes made to the draft final LTP4 strategy and Investment Plan in response to the public and stakeholder consultation are set out in paragraphs 2.14 and 2.17 respectively. We have also received cross party consensus on the draft final plan through ongoing engagement with the LTP4 Member Reference Group comprising members of Place Scrutiny Committee.

2.29 In view of the approach that we have used in developing the plan and the flexibility that this provides, we have been able to demonstrate that the plan can adapt easily to align to future changes in transport policy, including the emerging policy areas being proposed by the newly elected government and potential future funding streams.

2.30 With the longevity of the plan covering a 25-year period, and that the delivery of the plan does not wholly rest with the County Council but also with key stakeholders, we have set out the need to monitor the plan more closely. This will involve continuing with the successful relationships and collaboration developed with both internal officers and external partners during the development of the Plan, and specifically to maximise the opportunities to secure funding and enable scheme delivery.

2.31 The Cabinet recommends the County Council to:

☆ approve (1) the East Sussex Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) and Investment Plan for 2025 - 2050

3. Annual progress report to full Council on the Council's progress towards net zero

3.1 The Cabinet considered an annual progress report on the County Council's Climate Emergency Plan.

3.2 In October 2019 the Council declared a climate emergency. It set a target of achieving carbon neutrality from its activities as soon as possible and in any event by 2050 and committed to reporting annually to full Council on its progress towards meeting this target. Appendix 11 of this report sets out the draft progress and once approved, the progress report will be published on the Council's website.

Supporting Information

- 3.3 In October 2019 the Council agreed the following Motion, that the Council:
- (i) supports the aims and implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.*
 - (ii) recognises and declares a Climate Emergency.*
 - (iii) will set a target of achieving carbon neutrality from its activities as soon as possible and in any event by 2050, in line with the new target for the UK agreed by Parliament in 2019.*
 - (iv) will build upon the work we have undertaken to date, will commit resources where possible and will align our policies to address the Climate Emergency.*
 - (v) will set out a clear plan of action to reduce our carbon emissions.*
 - (vi) will report annually at the May Council Meeting on its progress towards the target.*
 - (vii) will investigate all possible sources of external funding and match funding to support this commitment, as well as writing to central government with respect to the emergency to request funding to implement swift appropriate actions.*

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(viii) will use our Environment Strategy to provide a strong unified voice in lobbying for support to address this emergency, sharing best practice across East Sussex and more widely through other partners.

3.4 In line with the commitment made in the Motion agreed in 2019, Cabinet agreed a Climate Emergency Plan in June 2020, which set out how the organisation would continue to reduce its carbon emissions, building on work undertaken since the first Carbon Management Plan was put in place in 2009. The Action Plan covered 2020-22 and set out the scale of the Council's carbon footprint, described the carbon budget that the Council will aim to keep within, and included a set of actions. In 2021/22 Cabinet agreed a further £9.945m to support the work to enable the Council to become carbon neutral and agreed that climate change be considered a basic need requirement within the Council's Capital Programme and Capital Strategy. Climate change has been embedded in the Council Plan and is recognised as a strategic corporate risk. In February 2023 an updated corporate Climate Emergency Plan, covering 2023-25, was agreed by full Council. This report sets out the progress achieved in 2023/24 in delivering the actions set out in the Plan.

Assessing the Council's Carbon Emissions

3.5 A clear understanding of the carbon emissions generated by our activities is a key foundation for working towards carbon neutrality. The corporate Climate Emergency Plan sets out the carbon emissions from the Council's activities using the Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Protocol, an accepted global standard for measuring and reporting on an organisation's GHG emissions. The Protocol divides GHG emissions into three categories, referred to as Scope 1, 2 and 3. Together, these represent the total GHG emissions related to an organisation and its activities. Each scope covers the following emissions:

- Scope 1 – emissions from the combustion of gas, oil, petrol, diesel, coal, or wood. For the Council this covers buildings and vehicles where the Council is responsible for paying for the fuel.
- Scope 2 – emissions from the electricity purchased by the Council.
- Scope 3 – emissions that result from all other activities of the Council. There are 15 different scope 3 categories defined in the Protocol, some of which do not apply to a local authority (e.g. emissions from manufactured goods). The categories that do apply include emissions from business travel, water usage, waste, procurement and staff commuting. In other words, the Council's scope 3 emissions mostly comprise the scope 1 and 2 emissions of other organisations (e.g. contractors).

3.6 The Council has measured scope 1, 2 and some scope 3 emissions since 2008-9. Data on scope 1 and 2 emissions is of higher quality than data on most scope 3 emissions, largely because the Council relies on third parties to provide their carbon emissions under scope 3. The Climate Emergency Plan highlights that scope 3 emissions are by far the largest part of the Council's estimated carbon footprint, notably through the supply chain i.e. the goods, works and services that are purchased by the Council in order to deliver its statutory functions. This is typical for a local authority, as most of the Council's revenue and capital budgets are used to procure goods, services and works from third parties. For an upper tier authority this includes major services such as highways maintenance, waste disposal, and education, as well as social care provision commissioned from a myriad of relatively small independent providers. The Climate Emergency Plan also highlights that the largest proportion of scope 1 and 2 emissions is from schools. Overall, this means that the majority of carbon emissions generated by the Council's activities are from sources over which the Council has influence but limited direct control.

3.7 The Council therefore has a large and complex carbon footprint. Further work is being carried out to quantify scope 3 emissions, notably from our extensive supply chain, before

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they can begin to be integrated reliably into the Council's carbon footprint and targets set. Consequently, the Climate Emergency Plan focusses primarily on reducing scope 1 and 2 emissions, for example carbon emissions from buildings. This is also typical for most local authorities.

Working Towards Carbon Neutrality From Our Activities

3.8 The approach adopted in the Climate Emergency Plan is that, in order to make its fair contribution to reducing county-wide emissions, the Council will aim to cut its own emissions in half in the 5 years between 2020-25. This is based on a recognised methodology developed by the UK's Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research for calculating the carbon budget by local authority area. A carbon budget represents the total quantity of greenhouse gases which can be released to the atmosphere if we are to contain temperature rises to a given level – this can be calculated globally and then broken down into national and sub-national budgets. The Tyndall model, based on current scientific understanding, indicates that to stay within a budget based on a rise of no more than 1.5 degrees centigrade above pre-industrial levels (as set out in the UN Paris Agreement on Climate Change) requires cutting emissions from East Sussex by half every 5 years.

3.9 This science-based reduction target is what the Council is working towards, rather than a fixed end date by which it will become carbon neutral. This approach is in line with advice to Councils from the Local Government Association, which has stated that: *“There is no science to picking an end year where emissions are zero. Setting a target year by which emissions will be zero can be symbolically important. However, what counts is the trajectory of the commitments to carbon reduction between now and the target zero emissions year. This defines the actual level of emissions reduction being promised over the budget period. This is what matters to climate change”*.

3.10 Cutting emissions in half every 5 years is extremely challenging. This is highlighted by modelling carried out by independent experts in 2022, which indicated that the Council would need approximately £200m up to 2050 to pay for capital intensive interventions to keep within the science-based target for just its scope 1 and 2 emissions. Many of the simpler and cheaper measures, and those within the Council's direct control, have already been implemented through the Council's carbon reduction programme that has been delivered for many years and which is summarized in Appendix 11. In addition, the last two years have seen significant cost increases through the supply chain, as well as delays to delivery with some projects due to bottlenecks in the supply of particular items and the limited availability of consultants and contractors with the right skills and experience. Some of these pressures have been partly mitigated by the Council successfully securing £1.9m of additional external funding since 2020. Bids for further external funding continue to be made, however there is intense competition for funding. In view of the challenging financial position for local government, which is highlighted in the Council's State of the County report in June 2024, lobbying of government to encourage larger scale and longer-term sustained funding for public sector decarbonization continues to take place.

3.11 Despite the challenging circumstances, Appendix 11 illustrates that the Council has reduced its emissions by 35% between 2019/20 and 2023/24, against the cumulative target of 43%. This is a shortfall of about 950 tonnes of CO₂e, which is equivalent to the average annual per capita emissions of about 170 people in the UK, based on the latest government data. The 35% reduction has largely been achieved through a combination of the carbon reduction measures that the Council has invested in, the decarbonization of the national electricity grid and changes to the Council's buildings portfolio. Other County Councils have not yet reported publicly on their performance in 2023/24, so it's not currently possible to compare the Council's performance with that of other local authorities. However, the most recent independent assessment of local authority performance in addressing climate change, carried out by Climate Emergency UK in 2023, ranked the Council as 7th amongst English

county councils and the highest performer amongst county councils in the South East in its overall approach to climate change.

3.12 Progress towards becoming a carbon neutral council is overseen by the Climate Emergency Board, which has senior representatives from every department and is co-chaired by the Chief Operating Officer and the Director for Communities, Economy and Transport. Reporting on progress is made quarterly to the Corporate Management Team, annually to Full Council and is published on the Council's website.

3.13 The Council has recognised the severity of the climate crisis by declaring a climate emergency, by setting a clear science-based target and by committing an additional £9.9m of funding up to March 2025 to cutting corporate carbon emissions. The scale of the Council's functions and the diversity of providers the Council works with makes this a complex and substantial task. Significant work has already been undertaken to reduce emissions and will continue to be undertaken. The report sets out the further progress made during 2023/24.

4. Ashdown Forest Trust Fund

4.1 The Ashdown Forest Trust, a registered charity, was set out by declaration of Trust in 1988. East Sussex County Council is the trustee and agrees grants made to the Ashdown Forest Conservators, from the Ashdown Forest Trust Fund.

Supporting Information

2022/23 Accounts

4.2 Subsequent to the 2022/23 accounts being approved, the independent Examination process has now been completed in accordance with Section 145 of the Charities Act 2011. The Examiner's report is attached as Appendix 12. It does not identify any issues that require any further action by the Council as the trustees.

2023/24 Accounts

4.3 The Trust's Income and Expenditure Account and Balance Sheet are set out in the attached Appendix 13. The Income and Expenditure Account shows a surplus in 2023/24 of £7,196, as a result of no legal cost being incurred during the year.

4.4 The main source of income to the Trust relates to the rent from the Royal Ashdown Golf Club at £70,000 per annum. The only other income this year was from bank interest. The expenditure mostly relates to the £65,100 grant paid to the Ashdown Forest Conservators. The remaining expenditure was for audit fees.

4.5 The accumulative General Reserve totalled £179,284 at 31 March 2024.

4.6 A formal annual report and statement of accounts will be compiled in accordance with the Charity Commission's Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) by the end of January 2025, once the Independent Examiner report has been received.

4.7 The trust made an operating surplus of £7,196 during 2023/24. The General Reserve as at 31 March 2024 amounts to £179,284. This fund is available to finance expenditure which meets the Trust's objectives.