

Appendix B

Detailed Achievements and Progress Report Council Strategy 2019 – 2023

Core Business Achievements and Progress:

The Council provides over 700 mandatory functions. The ones that are most important to West Berkshire residents have been grouped under Core Business areas in the Council Strategy 2019-2023.

Under normal circumstances, the delivery of the mandatory function is ‘business as usual’ for the Council and these areas strong performance is achieved, including when benchmarking with other local authorities in the country. However, the challenges resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic and from displacement of people due to conflicts in other parts of the world, meant that the delivery of such services had to be prioritised. The Council services, on which residents relied on, remained operational whilst additional support was delivered to residents during the Covid-19 national lockdowns and post-Covid restrictions as part of the Recovery and Renewal Strategy.

Despite these challenging circumstances, ambitious targets have been maintained for core business areas and good performance has been maintained over the period of the Strategy:

► CORE BUSINESS: Protecting our children

Achievements:

- ✓ The Council has continued to deliver a Children and Family service rated as ‘Good’ at the [last Ofsted inspection](#) (Mar 2022).
- ✓ During the last 4 years, the Council responded to over 7,000 referrals of children at risk of neglect and abuse. Arrangements for stronger joint working between the Council’s teams and with partner organisations ensured cases were identified and supported.
- ✓ Statutory assessments and visits were conducted in a timely manner, including by adapting during Covid crisis and using technology when it was appropriate and safe to do so
- ⌚ There was some pressure on timeliness of visits to child protection cases due to increasing demand post lockdown

► CORE BUSINESS: Supporting education

Achievements:

- ✓ A higher proportion (94%) of the district’s schools (incl. academies and iCollege) were rated good or outstanding by Ofsted (just below our ambitious target of 95%).
- ✓ During 2019 to 2022, a total of 6,807 primary (reception) and 5,598 secondary (Year 7) school place offers have been made.
- ✓ Investment in our schools has ensured that over 98% of applications for primary and 99% for secondary school places received one of their top three preferences.
- ✓ The proportion of 16-17 year olds in education and training has increased from 92% in 2019 to 93.2% and West Berkshire was in second quartile of local authorities (Data Matrix Dec22), in England.

► CORE BUSINESS: Ensuring the wellbeing of older people and vulnerable adults

Achievements:

- ✓ In the last four years Adult Social Care (ASC) service has responded to more than 13,700 new requests for support.
- ✓ At any point in time in the last four years ASC has supported, on average 1,740 vulnerable adults and older people with long-term services, and managed over 2,100 adult safeguarding enquiries
- ✓ Completed timely financial assessments for over 95% of cases in every quarter (in some quarters for 100% of cases).
- ✓ Public Health Outcome Framework (2021/22) data show that accommodation and employment of people with physical or learning disabilities are in line with Regional and National results
- ⌚ 4 out of 5 adult social care services are rated 'Good' or higher by the Care Quality Commission regarding safety. Improvements have been made regarding the fifth service too.

► CORE BUSINESS: Maintaining our roads

Achievements:

- ✓ Over 95% of the works orders for permanent potholes and edge or road repairs are completed in a timely manner. A new recording system was implemented by the service.
- ⌚ West Berkshire was amongst the top 25% authorities nationally in terms of the high quality of our road network. Additional investment in the A road network in 2020/21 and 2021/22 included £4.5m from the DfT's Challenge Fund. This ensured that only 3% of our network was assessed as in need of repairs, which is better compared to the national average 4%, however, below our ambitious target of 2%.

► CORE BUSINESS: Countryside and open spaces

- ✓ Retained Green Flag status (scheme recognises and rewards well managed parks and green spaces, setting the benchmark standard for the management of recreational outdoor spaces) for Goldwell and Linear Parks.
- ✓ Progressed the survey of the highway verge network with partners and volunteers for the wildlife verges project
- ⌚ The work to adopt the Rights of Way Improvement Plan has progressed but there have been some delays resulted a high volume of responses to public consultation.

► CORE BUSINESS: Collecting your bins and keeping the streets clean

- ✓ During lockdown, resources have been prioritised to ensure the kerbside collection service continued to operate. We provided a good level of recycling, composting and reusing as a proportion of the waste collected. We have reduced the percentage of waste landfilled to a level that is well below the maximum threshold set.
- ⌚ An overall rating of 'Good' has been maintained in terms of an acceptable level of litter, detritus and graffiti for two years of the council strategy period. The latest provisional rating is Satisfactory due to contractor's resources being prioritised on waste management during and post pandemic, including increased demand and additional services (e.g. food waste collection service).

► CORE BUSINESS: Providing benefits

- ✓ Good performance continues to be achieved with timely decisions on new or changes to Housing Benefits Claims. These good results have been achieved on a background on increasing pressure on our services from deploying existing staff to support with additional work in order to help the residents and local businesses during and post Covid crisis (for details see report on the Recovery and Renewal Strategy delivery).

► CORE BUSINESS: Collecting Council Tax and Business rates

- ✓ The usually strong performance in collecting Council Tax and the business rates has been impacted in 2020/21 by the conscious decision of the Council to allow more flexibility in order to support the residents struggling financially as a result of Covid-19 challenges. Arrangements have been put in place to mitigate the financial impact and performance has reverted to the usual good levels.
- ✓ In addition to delivering the core function of collecting business rates, our team has put in place arrangements to promptly distribute Government grants to support local businesses and manage a Council Tax Hardship fund.

► CORE BUSINESS: Planning and housing

- ✓ The determination of planning applications, in a timely manner, has improved considerably over the first three years of the strategy, exceeding national averages. In the last 9 months the service is addressing some staff recruitment challenges in the service.
- ✓ Adopted the West Berkshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan
- ✓ Significant improvements have been achieved for the timeliness of assessing Common Housing Register applications. Improvements to set targets have been achieved in homelessness prevention and relief duties resulting in secure accommodation.

► CORE BUSINESS: Culture, leisure and libraries

- ✓ The usually high number of visits to libraries (physical and virtual), including the Mobile and 'At home' Service has reduced during 2020/21 due to lockdown restrictions. Wherever possible, the mobile delivery 'Order & Collect' service and 'At Home' services have operated as normal. An online service has been made available to ensure residents can still have access to books. There is good recovery following the lifting of the Covid restrictions, exceeding the agreed targets.

► CORE BUSINESS: Economic Development

- ✓ Good engagement with the top local employers focused on ensuring that they remain in the District.
- ✓ In addition to distributing Government grants to support eligible businesses and self-employed residents, support and advice has been provided to businesses and town centre groups to enable them to reopen safely when lockdown measures had eased.
- ✓ Delivering quarterly business engagement events to provide businesses with advice and guidance, or promote awareness of Council activities
- ⌚ Progress to establish and implement an account management approach toward business and investment relationship management and support is dependent on delayed funding for a Business Investment Officer for the UK Social Prosperity Fund, which will be progressed during 2023/24.

► CORE BUSINESS: Covid-19 response

- ✓ West Berkshire showed better resilience to the Covid-19 crisis. The Council has focused resources and made decisions to save lives and livelihoods, working with residents, communities, voluntary sector organisation and the business sector.

Priorities for Improvement Achievements and Progress:

Whilst delivering the core business services and responding to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Council has maintained the focus on the areas identified for improvement in the Strategy (approved in 2019 and refreshed in 2021). Despite the significant challenges and taking the opportunities arising from the pandemic, ambitious targets have been maintained and achieved in relation to the six priorities for improvement. Some of the innovative and effective solutions have been recognised and awarded nationally (e.g. the Community Municipal Investment Bond enabling residents to invest in renewable solutions won the Public Finance Award for Sustainability and Social Value, innovative projects addressing issues such as fall prevention or availability of a chatbot voice assistant for residents won the Digital Innovation and Technology Award,

Priority 1. Ensure our vulnerable children and adults achieve better outcomes

A. Strategy commitments

Council Strategy Initial Commitments 2019 – 2023	Commitments for 2021 – 2023
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Support children, young people and vulnerable adults at an earlier stage, ensuring they are safe, through prevention and early intervention services.Improve outcomes for our looked after children, and other vulnerable children and adults.Ensure better outcomes for social care users and improved satisfaction.Safeguard against new and emerging risks.Support more vulnerable young adults into employment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">(Continue) To support vulnerable residents at an earlier stage, by carrying forward successful prevention and early intervention arrangements.(Amended) (Recovery) A renewed focus on improving outcomes for vulnerable children, young people (education attainment, school absence and exclusions, health checks) and vulnerable adults (through timely reviews and rebalancing of the hospital pathways relating to reablement vs long term care)(Continue) (Recovery) Support more vulnerable young adults into employment

B. Progress to date against the commitments 2019 - 2023

Prevention Commitment:

- ✓ Children were supported within their families so that fewer of them require care proceedings or a child protection plan, or being taken into care. To achieve this, we have adopted an Early Help Strategy and are supporting families through the Early Response Hub or initiatives such as Family Safeguarding Model and the Troubled Families Programme. Families are supported by professionals from different services working together to address a range of issues, including domestic abuse, mental health, substance misuse, offending or unemployment. There is some challenging increase in demand as a result of Covid but the preventative approach worked.
- ✓ Nine in every 10 vulnerable adults and older people from the community, are receiving Adult Social Care services at preventative level (Tier 1).
- ✓ All rough sleepers are offered accommodation and households are supported to prevent individuals or families from becoming homeless or repeat homeless.

- ⌚ Resources are diverted to respond to Adult Social Care increasing demand which impacts on timeliness of reviews of long term support cases. We have achieved zero or very low numbers of rough sleepers over the first three years of the strategy. Whilst our services are able to work with West Berkshire residents to prevent/address rough sleeping, a small number of recent cases, more challenging to support early, relate to people coming here from other local authority areas.

Outcomes and improved satisfaction:

- ✓ Adopted a joint commissioning approach with our partners (Berkshire West) across the health and social care system to maximise the value and quality of social care services that are available to residents. Users reported that adult social care services made them feel safe and secure, safeguarding (S42) cases achieved the outcomes desired by the person subject to the enquiry.
- ⌚ Some outcomes for children in care (school attendance and exclusions, health and dental checks) were impacted by Covid restrictions.

Safeguarding against new/emerging risks Commitment:

- ✓ Strengthened the safeguarding arrangements by implementing a joint Local Safeguarding Children's Board to provide independent scrutiny across Berkshire West.
- ✓ Service users reported that safeguarding (S42) enquiries achieved desired outcomes and support is provided by independent advocates where needed.

Employment:

- ✓ A greater proportion of care leavers, compared with other Local Authorities, are in employment, education and training.
- ✓ Produced a strategic framework to improve the employment opportunities of vulnerable people.
- ⌚ There were some difficulties enrolling disadvantaged 16-25 year olds in training funded by the apprenticeship levy but during the last year of the strategy numbers are increasing.

Priority 2. Support everyone to reach their full potential

A. Strategy commitments

Council Strategy Initial Commitments 2019 – 2023	Commitments for 2021 – 2023
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Support everyone in their learning journey to achieve their bestImprove the health and wellbeing of our residents through appropriate interventions and policiesHelp people to help themselves and others	<ul style="list-style-type: none">(Amended) (Recovery) Assist schools to implement emerging national policies and local solutions to support pupils' educational attainment, with a particular focus on disadvantaged cohort.(Amended) (Recovery) Develop approaches to address the backlog of activities that improve the health and wellbeing (health checks, antenatal visits, participation in sports and leisure activities).(New) (Recovery) Improve mental health and wellbeing (by working with HWBB partners as part of the prevention concordat action plan)(Amend) Help residents and communities to help themselves and others.

B. Progress to date against the commitments 2019 - 2023:

Learning Journey:

- ✓ The District's secondary school pupils, have top quartile results in exams, compared to other councils.
- ✓ Low absence levels place the district amongst top 25% local authorities in the country.
- ✓ Construction of new schools continued and, despite the pandemic, Highwood Copse School and the Theale Primary School projects have been completed, and a number of schools extended, providing a good learning environment and sufficient places so pupils in West Berkshire can secure places at their preferred schools. A programme of decarbonisation of our schools continues as planned.
- ✓ Schools and pupils have been supported through a number of initiatives (e.g. laptop for pupils, Covid risk assessment, etc.) so that education for children and young people continued, via remote learning when necessary and accommodating vulnerable pupils and key workers' children in school.
- ✓ A learning space for children with physical disabilities opened at Speenhamland School
- ⌚ The district has some of the smallest cohorts of pupils eligible for Free School Meals (FSM), we are amongst the lowest 10 in the country. This makes it much more challenging to ensure the gap between FSM and non-FSM cohorts are smaller compared to other areas.
- ⌚ The good benchmarking position achieved for the Early Years Foundation Stage attainment pre-pandemic, including by the cohort of pupils eligible for free school meals has not been maintained, however the latest results are less than half of a percentage point compared to the England average.

Health and Wellbeing:

- ✓ Prioritised residents' health and wellbeing by setting up the Community Hub in partnership with Greenham Trust and Volunteer Centre West Berkshire, by supporting schools to re-open safely, providing community testing facilities and Covid Marshals, distributing the Covid Winter Grant for those most affected by the pandemic, providing advice and guidance including on addressing domestic violence, setting up a mental health help line.
- ✓ Health impact assessments have been implemented, ensuring that the decision making processes are taking into consideration the impacts on health.
- ✓ Work was progressed to adopt an Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) Strategy aiming to build resilience and help to prevent the impact of ACE from being passed onto the next generation. This should contribute to a reduction of demand on public service, improving mental and physical health and socio-economic benefits.

- ✓ Junior and senior attendances at sport and leisure centres have recovered well post Covid lockdowns.
- ⌚ A number of Public Health actions such as health checks and the national pupils' weight measurement programme have not been progressed due to restrictions and focusing on other activities to respond to Covid-19. Ante-natal visits by midwives have been replaced by the distribution of a video guide to all expecting parents and visits completions remain very low compared to pre-Covid.

Improve mental health:

- ✓ All Health & Wellbeing Board partners signed up to the Prevention Concordat for Better Mental Health. The action plan is set to deliver prevention and improvements in mental health by better understanding the local needs, and coordinating work with partners based on clearly defined outcomes and leadership.
- ✓ Funding awarded to local organisations from the Surviving to Thriving Fund (provides support to develop services that improve mental health and wellbeing of West Berkshire residents)
- ⌚ A number of Public Health mental health and wellbeing actions have been delayed by Covid but are being delivered now (e.g. Support schools to incorporate therapeutic thinking principles into their policies to support mental health and wellbeing).

Help people to help themselves:

- ✓ Adopted a Community Wellbeing Model: as part of this, befrienders supported residents to self-care and lead independent lives.
- ✓ A Communications and Engagement Strategy was approved and is delivered to ensure we meet the needs of those we serve.
- ✓ Support and guidance has been provided to communities working together to produce neighbourhood development plans (a community-led planning approach to help people shape the future of the areas in which they live).
- ✓ New devolution deals with Parish and Town Councils, community forums and other groups, agreed in order to increase the sustainability of local services.
- ✓ A number of procurement initiatives have been implemented to support the district's voluntary sector (Awarded Voluntary Sector Prospectus funding, tracking voluntary sector suppliers and local Small, Medium Enterprises on the procurement portal).
- ✓ The Council implemented a number of initiatives to support and welcome in the District people displaced due to conflict in Afghanistan, Ukraine etc.
- ⌚ Usually volunteers are involved in supporting cultural services but Covid-19 restricted their involvement. However, the 2019 residents' survey and the participation of volunteers in the activities coordinated by the Council's Community Hub, show that more residents have volunteered instead, to support the response to Covid-19.

Priority 3. Support businesses to start, develop and thrive in West Berkshire

A. Strategy commitments

Council Strategy Initial Commitments 2019 – 2023	Commitments for 2021 – 2023
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the help and guidance for start-ups and existing small businesses to grow, including facilitation of access to business incubators or similar resources and initiatives • Ensure our planning policies enable start-up and growth of business in the district • Provide incentives and opportunities to enable businesses to grow 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Continue) Provide help and guidance for start-ups and existing small businesses to grow, including facilitation of access to business incubators or similar resources and initiatives. • (Amend) As part of refreshing the Local Plan, strengthen policies to support economic development. • (Amend) (Recovery) Provide incentives and support for viable businesses in the district, to help areas of hardship • (New) (Recovery) Support town centres to recover from the Covid-19 impact and adapt to any changes as a result of more working from home. • Implement a new policy on Social Value to generate greater positive economic, environmental and social outcomes

B. Progress to date against the commitments 2019 - 2023:

Improve help and guidance for start-ups and business growth:

- ✓ Organised or participated in over 150 economic development events and projects (e.g. Small Business Saturdays and advice for skills and employment meetings) to expand business links, promote our economic priorities and the support available to businesses.
- ✓ Referred over 200 new business start-ups or small and medium sized companies, to receive support from the Business Growth Hub (LEP Escalator Programme). More than 150 businesses received support relating to food safety and hygiene, Health and Safety, and licensing, from the Public Protection Partnership (PPP). Developed specific advice on the PPP website and promoted it through social media which recorded approximately 200,000 contacts/page views.
- ✓ Developed an Inward Investment Prospectus to promote the West Berkshire brand and work with Local Enterprise Partnership to encourage Foreign Direct Investment.
- ✓ Established an apprenticeship levy fund that is available to small and medium business in West Berkshire

Local Plan, strengthen policies to support economic development:

- ✓ West Berkshire Council has appointed a multi-disciplinary team which undertook a major new study into the future uses of Newbury Town Centre.
- ✓ Arrangements have been put in place to embed employment and skills plans into major applications as part of S106 agreement negotiations. In addition, the Economic Development Service is consulted on every non-residential planning application to ensure the needs of businesses are given full consideration in the non-residential planning process.
- ✓ Completed a study to support the development of the Local plan, to identify the employment land and housing need in the district.

Incentives and opportunities to enable businesses to grow:

- ✓ Adopted a West Berkshire Economic Development Strategy and refreshed it to reflect the impact of Covid-19.
- ✓ Established a forum with rural businesses and the horse racing industry in West Berkshire
- ✓ Activities to organise and run a careers fair in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines delayed due to Covid-19 are now reported on track. Engaged with the business community, including through a Rural Business Forum.

Support town centres to recover from the Covid-19:

- ✓ Adopted Newbury Town Centre Masterplan – adapting the town centre to the future needs of residents and local economy whilst making the most of its assets (the canal, historic building, lanes and yards, local independent shops and cafes); developed the proposal for the Wharf redesign.
- ✓ Work is progressing on track to develop town centre studies for Thatcham and Hungerford.
- ✓ Organised events and campaigns to support recovery of our town centres (e.g. “Christmas in Newbury”, “Shop Local Shop Green”,

Implement a Social Value Policy:

- ✓ Adopted the new procurement social value policy.
- ✓ Created a framework to embed social value as part of the procurement process.

Priority 4. Develop local infrastructure including housing to support and grow the local economy

A. Strategy commitments

Council Strategy Initial Commitments 2019 – 2023	Commitments for 2021 – 2023
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an Integrated Infrastructure Plan to deliver regeneration, housing, flood prevention and alleviation schemes, and travel and transport infrastructure Further develop digital infrastructure and information assets in the district Enhance the arts, culture and leisure offering of the district 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an Integrated Infrastructure Plan to deliver regeneration, housing, flood prevention and alleviation schemes, and travel and transport infrastructure. (Amended) (Recovery) increase the terrestrial and mobile digital connectivity in the district. (Recovery) Enhance the arts, culture and leisure offering of the district.

B. Progress to date against the commitments 2019 - 2023:

Integrated Infrastructure Plan:

- ✓ Preventing traffic congestion by completing the A4 Thatcham Intelligent Transport Journey Time Measurement System.
- ✓ Work to enable the completion of additional residential units continued; the production of the infrastructure delivery plan has been completed and supports West Berkshire's growth through to 2039. As at Mar 2022, over 1,738 additional homes have been completed (see Annual Monitoring report 2022), in addition, more than 580 received planning permission, including 300 affordable homes. Developed an agreed plan with Sovereign Housing Association as part of the Joint Housing Venture and supported the submission of planning applications for two sites identified in the Joint Housing Venture (Chestnut Walk and Phoenix Court)
- ⌚ 341 affordable homes have been completed by Mar 2022 (below expected target of 375) but over 900 affordable units have received planning permission and are yet to be built.
- ⌚ Changes in national policy requirements impacted on the submission of the Local Plan for examination, however progress has been made and the process has reached the consultation stage (on Proposed Submission (Regulation 19) Local Plan Review 2022-2039
- ✓ Updated the Urban Traffic Management Control system to an intelligent system to maintain traffic flow and reduce CO2 emissions.
- ✓ Housing strategy and the delivery plan have been approved in March 21 and include the assessment of need of a key worker accommodation programme
- ✓ Over 640 additional properties are now protected from flooding. (well above the target of 500)
- ✓ Investment continued in our road network through the delivery of the highway improvement programme. Roads in Beedon, Burghfield and Thatcham have been resurfaced using an innovative approach with a lower-carbon footprint, which combined with planting of 152 trees achieved carbon neutrality of the scheme.

Develop Digital infrastructure:

- ✓ Superfast Broadband has been made available to over 97% of the properties in the district. Work is progressing to connect premises in the district to Full Fibre.
- ✓ Progress has been made to install more wireless connectivity infrastructure (Long Range Wide Area Networks) to support the emerging 'Internet of Things' devices and services.

Enhance the arts, culture and leisure offering of the district:

- ✓ Produced a new West Berkshire Leisure Strategy and a new 10-year Cultural Heritage Strategy
- ✓ Completed a feasibility study for options on the Faraday Road site, in line with the playing pitch strategy action plan

- ✓ Our libraries have achieved the highest level in the South East region of children and young people's participation in the Summer Reading Challenge in 2021 and 2022.
- ⌚ Progress with the review of the Library service is continuing and is planned to be completed during 2023.

Priority 5. Maintain a green district

A. Strategy commitments

Council Strategy Initial Commitments 2019 – 2023	Commitments for 2021 – 2023
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Develop more sustainable transport solutions which protect the environmentPromote and improve cycle ways in the districtDevelop opportunities and expertise to take advantage of the production, storage and utilisation of green energyMinimise the impact on the environment in delivering services such as the use assistive technologies in social care	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Continue the development of more sustainable transport solutions which protect the environment.(Amended) (Recovery) Develop and Implement infrastructure to encourage active travel.(Amended) Expand the production, storage and utilisation of renewable energy.(Amended) Minimise the impact on the environment when delivering our services.

B. Progress to date against the commitments 2019 - 2023:

Sustainable transport solutions:

- ✓ Improved traffic flow and air quality are supported by the newly adopted Environment Strategy and delivery plan. A trial of air quality sensors has taken place in Thatcham, to inform the installation of digital, signposting infrastructure to suggest alternative faster and less polluting routes.
- ✓ Further expanding the network of Electric Vehicle charging points across the District, and installing them in all council public car parks.
- ⌚ Progress has been made to draft the Local Transport Plan but its final adoption is dependent on government guidance.

Infrastructure to encourage active travel

- ✓ To improve the cycle ways and walking routes, the Council completed the Thatcham section of the new National Cycle Route - NCN 422 Sustrans route, delivered two kilometres of additional cycle routes, and produced a cycling and walking infrastructure Plan for Newbury and Thatcham.
- ✓ Residents have been invited to collaborate with the Council on designing more active travel schemes to enhance safety, the environment and air quality. However, monitoring active travel remains a challenge.

Production, storage and utilisation of green energy

- ✓ Energy is generated from renewable sources following the installation of solar panel across all Council's estate pilot sites. A robust programme based on feasibility and prioritisation of additional sites, is progressing and risks around procurement and availability of materials are being managed.
- ✓ Feasibility work has been completed for installing 2 megawatts of solar photovoltaic (PV) to generate energy from a new solar farm. Planning permission was granted for this by the Eastern Area Planning Committee.

Minimise the impact on the environment in delivering services:

- ✓ The Natural Solutions Delivery Partnership has been established to bring together key organisations and stakeholders involved in the design and implementation of natural solutions to achieve carbon neutrality in West Berkshire.
- ✓ There is a good take up of assistive technology and telecare by social care service users, contributing to a reduced need for long-term services and enabling people to continue to live safely in their communities where possible.
- ✓ Further improvements for the proportion of household waste that has been recycled, composted, reused and recovered, are supported by a new, separate food waste collection.
- ✓ Arrangements have been put in place to ensure that all decisions made by the Council are informed by an assessment of their impact on the environment.
- ⌚ Plans to invest in measures to naturally capture and reduce carbon dioxide (large scale afforestation and natural regeneration in rural areas, urban tree planting etc.) have been amended in order to focus on the work of the Natural Solutions Delivery Partnership for facilitating increased biodiversity and carbon sequestration projects.

Priority 6. Ensure sustainable services through innovation and partnerships

A. Strategy commitments

Council Strategy Initial Commitments 2019 – 2023	Commitments for 2021 – 2023
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expand our work with partner organisations and communities to improve services for local residents• Increase the sustainability of our business models by expanding on the initiatives to generate income for supporting vital Council's services• Implement a Workforce strategy which supports leadership development, recruitment and retention and employee wellbeing• Use data to better understand our services' beneficiaries to improve the way we interact with them and the services we provide	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• (Amended) (Recovery) Expand our work with partner organisations and communities to improve services for local residents and tackle inequalities.• (Continue) Implement a Workforce strategy which supports staff engagement (Peer Challenge Rec 10) and leadership development, recruitment and retention, and employee wellbeing• (Amended) (Recovery) Enhance the communication and engagement with our residents to develop a better understanding of their needs.• (New) Expand the accessibility of our services through digital means.• (Continue) Expand on the initiatives to generate income for supporting vital Council's services

B. Progress to date against the commitments 2019 - 2023:

Expand partnership working:

- ✓ Identified ways of improving the outcomes for those requiring health and social care support, whilst improving value for money. Agreed the Integrated Care partnership (ICP) work programme. Adopted the *Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy* with our Berkshire West partners.
- ✓ Agreed a Primary Care Networks plan with local Clinical Commissioning Groups, in order to ensure residents receive better services as a result of multi-disciplinary teams of professionals working together (GP practices, community, mental health, social care, pharmacy, hospital and voluntary services) and joint commissioning of services.
- ✓ Developed a co-production framework, reviewed how we are engaging with Town and Parish Councils and implemented a solution for community signposting.

Increase sustainability by expanding on the initiatives to generate income:

- ✓ Areas where the Council can develop a commercial approach have been identified and prioritised as part of a Strategic Position Statement on commercialisation. Investments made by the Council generate annual income of approximately £1million.
- ✓ A Community Municipal Investment (CMI) bond, the first initiative in the UK that allows residents to invest in local renewable energy projects, has been implemented.
- ⇒ Work with CIPFA has started to establish future use of the Council's assets, maintenance and disposal requirements across our Estate, and to implement a Corporate Landlord Strategy. The latter of these actions is expected to be progressed during 2023/24.

Staff engagement, Leadership development, recruitment and retention and employee wellbeing:

- ✓ Actions to position the Council as an ‘employer of choice’ ensured an employee turnover rate below the maximum threshold. Even more relevant during the Covid-19 challenges, a confidential Employee Assistance and Wellbeing Programme has been put in place to support employees, a Staff Covid-19 survey has been conducted, regular Let’s Chat online meetings between the Chief Executive, the Leader of the Council and staff, and a research on gender diversity in senior roles.
- ⌚ During 2022/23, staff turnover has increased and resources have been put in place to support talent retention and acquisition.

Better understand our services’ beneficiaries to ensure improved services:

- ✓ A strategy overhauling the Council’s approach to communication and engagement, has been agreed (Peer Challenge Rec 1&4). It is built on learnings from the excellent interaction between the Council, its partner organisations, residents and community groups, whilst responding to the Coronavirus. A Covid -19 residents’ survey took place in June 2020 to capture their views and inform the recovery strategy and other plans. A representative Residents Survey was conducted in Dec 2021 to capture resident’s feedback and to inform the new Council Strategy and other key plans.
- ✓ Implemented direct communication approaches with residents through a number of digital channels
- ✓ As part of the New Ways of Working Programme, a review of the Council’s services has been completed, focusing on identifying transformation and improvement options, including digitisation. These are progressed as part of the Council’s Transformation Programme (Peer Challenge Rec 5).
- ✓ Increased the opportunities for residents to interact directly with the Councillors and officers, including through live YouTube and Facebook events and by broadcasting Council and other Committee meetings.

