
Bath and North East Somerset Council

Corporate Strategy

2020-2024

Structure of the document:

1. Welcome and Foreword (Leader and Chief Executive)
2. Context and Challenges
3. Our Framework
4. Our Core Policies
5. Our Principles and Commitments
6. Delivering the Strategy

Appendix – Community Engagement Charter

WELCOME FROM THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

The council exists for a clear purpose - to improve people's lives. Our new administration was elected in May 2019 on a bold and ambitious manifesto of change. This strategy sets out how we will make this a reality and deliver these commitments.

We are passionate about Bath and North East Somerset. We are proud of our diverse and vibrant communities, our strong economy, our heritage, our beautiful surroundings and the people who live and work here.

There are some big challenges. We are committed to addressing the climate and nature emergency and to playing our part in the urgent action needed for this. We want to work with local people to make it easier to travel around sustainably, to build more affordable homes, to support the local economy and to secure better ways of meeting the needs of our most vulnerable.

We will work with local communities so they can have a greater say and take more responsibility for what goes on in their areas and address the issues that are most important to them. We want to listen to the views of our residents and partners and ensure that the council is operating transparently.

Achieving this will not be easy. The council faces unprecedented financial pressures. We must prioritise what we spend and be clear about what we are here to deliver. This strategy sets out this new direction.

We recognise that the council cannot do it alone. We need to continue to build strong working relationships with local communities and our partners. We also need to support our local citizens so that they can live independently and feel connected locally.

We want to get things done quickly but we also need to plan ahead. We have made a strong start and I welcome you holding us to account.

I look forward to working with you and our communities over the coming years.

Cllr Dine Romero

Leader of Bath and North East Somerset Council

FOREWORD – CHIEF EXECUTIVE

My job as Chief Executive is to ensure everyone who delivers services for the benefit of Bath and North East Somerset's residents - whether that's in social care, refuse collection or highways - work together to improve people's lives.

This corporate strategy is all about achieving this. It sets out what we plan to do, how we plan to do it, and how we will measure our performance. It will guide us as we take decisions and help us become more accountable to the communities we serve.

The council has a strong record of delivering good quality services to local people and has much to be proud of. I want us to build on these foundations and challenge ourselves to be even better. The commitments we are making to achieve this are set out in these pages.

You will also see changes in how the council works. For many of our services, we will increasingly be using new technology, including online tools so that residents can self-serve. This will free us up so we can focus our help on those who need it the most. We will also seek your views to help us shape our decisions and policies.

We recognise also that we will need to work closely with our partners on the key challenges facing the area, such as the climate and nature emergency, and ensuring our residents- particularly young people- have access to the education and skills they need to thrive.

I look forward to ensuring the council plays an active, positive and influential role in shaping our area.

Will Godfrey
Chief Executive

CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES

About our area

Bath and North East Somerset is thriving and diverse, with many needs, strengths, resources and assets.

As well as being our main commercial and recreational centre, the World Heritage City of Bath is an international tourist and heritage destination that provides a spectacular setting for world-class arts, culture and leisure facilities. Our market towns of Keynsham, Midsomer Norton and Radstock combine with rural communities ranging from the foothills of the Mendips, to the Chew Valley in the west and Cotswold villages around Bath.

- **Two thirds** of the area lies in Green Belt. We have **2** areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, **37** Conservation Areas and **6,408** Listed Buildings
- Home to over **192,000** people, we expect our population to rise to **199,000 by 2037**. The most significant increases will be amongst older people, with a **124%** increase in those aged 85 and over
- Between 2001 and 2017, the growth in the 20-24 age range accounted for nearly 50% of the area's population growth, highlighting the area's **student population**

About the council

The council has an important role in shaping the future of our area. Despite reductions in funding in recent years, we have access to skills and resources that can improve people's lives and meet our key challenges. The council provides and commissions hundreds of services to local residents. For example, in 2017/18 we:

- Issued **326,000 library items**
- Prepared **1,185** Educational Health Care Plans for children with special educational needs and disabilities
- Supported **1,551** vulnerable adults to live independently in their own homes
- Secured residential care for **1,000** people
- Considered over **1,100** licensing and **3,000** planning applications
- Provided services supporting **521** people with learning difficulties, **348** people with mental health issues and **1,318** people with physical support
- Maintained **1250 km** of highways and **16,000** street lights

Our key challenges

- **Tackling the climate and nature emergency.** In March 2019 the council resolved to declare a Climate Emergency. This was in response to the latest science from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and clear demands from our community.

The council pledged to provide the leadership to enable B&NES to become carbon neutral by 2030 and make the council itself carbon neutral by the same date. This will have a significant impact on everything we do as an organisation and requires a step change across the public, private and community sectors in our area.

- **Inequalities in life experience.** Despite our area being one of the least deprived authorities in the country, there are significant inequality gaps in education, employment and health outcomes for local residents. Life expectancy for men varies by up to 8 years between those living in our least and most deprived areas.

Our more disadvantaged pupils often achieve lower qualifications and fewer go on to sustain education, employment or training after reaching 18. We need to do more to address inequalities in the educational attainment of our young people.

- **Budget pressures in delivering our statutory social care duties to support vulnerable residents.** Over 80% of our funding now goes into health, social care and children's services. Our older residents are living longer with complex and combined health conditions which are costly. The number of looked after children has also risen by 40% in the past 5 years. Supporting the 21 children with the most complex needs cost over £3m in 2018-19.

We must be as efficient and effective as possible in delivering these services. This requires some hard decisions about where our money is best spent. We also need to think about how we can help our residents to live well so that we can deliver services into the future.

- **Working better with our local communities.** Our local communities have significant strengths and resources. This includes skills, knowledge and links which support a wide range of groups and networks. Our residents have an important contribution to make to meeting our key challenges, whether being a good neighbour, making healthy choices, or volunteering in a community project.

We need to listen to local people about what is working well in their area and develop solutions which work for them, rather than imposing an approach from above. The council can also help local communities by using the skills and experience of our employees, as well as our buildings and other facilities.

OUR FRAMEWORK

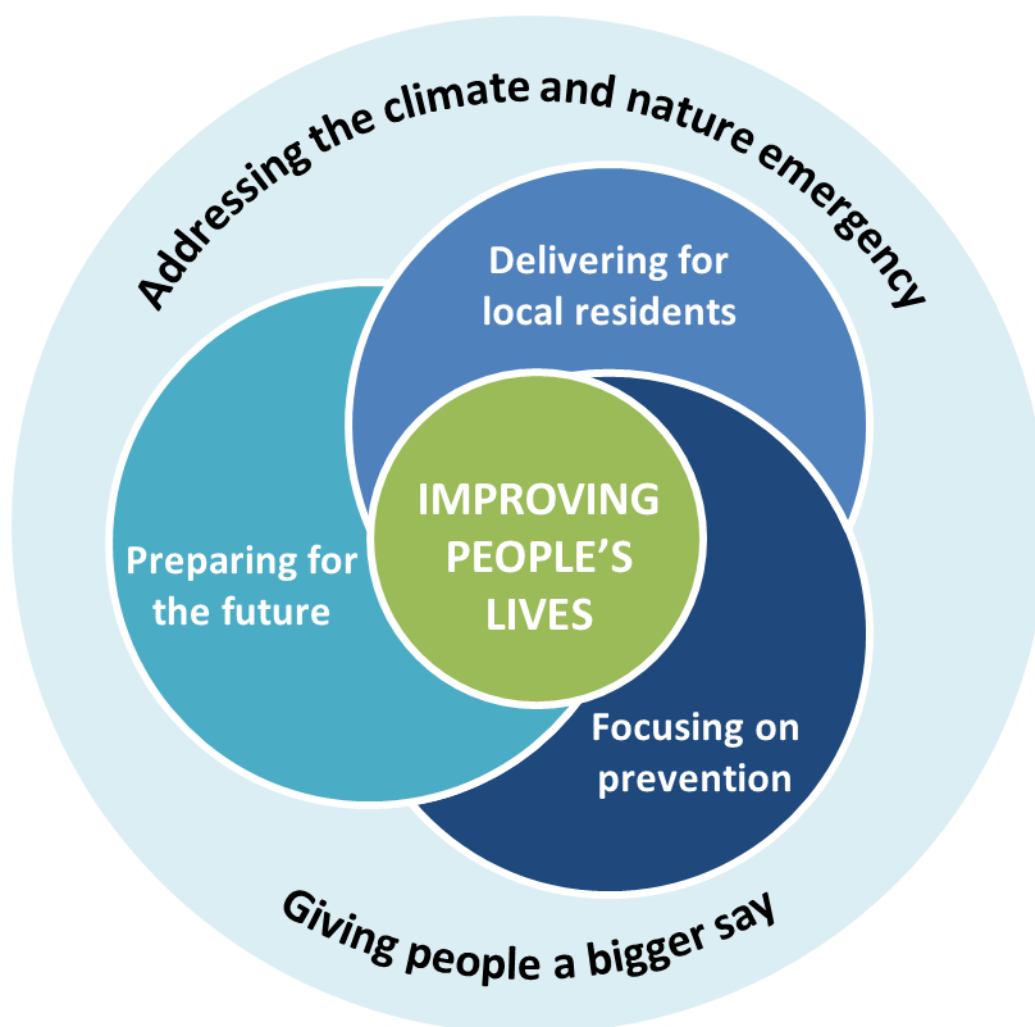
ONE: We have **one** overriding purpose – to improve people’s lives.

This might sound simple but it brings together everything we do, from cleaning the streets to caring for our older people. It is the foundation for our strategy and we will ensure that it drives our commitments, spending and service delivery.

TWO: We have **two** core policies – **tackling the climate and nature emergency** and **giving people a bigger say**. These will shape **everything** we do.

THREE: To translate our purpose into commitments, we have identified **three** principles. We want to **prepare for the future, deliver for local residents and focus on prevention**.

This is all set out clearly in the diagram below:



This is the “golden thread” which drives what we do. Our strategy has been developed alongside our Medium Term Financial Strategy and our People Strategy. This will ensure that setting budgets and managing our people - our most valuable resource - are guided by the council’s priorities. It also means that our commitments are realistic and achievable.

OUR CORE POLICIES

Being clear about **how** we will do things is just as important as what we will be doing. Our two core policies which shape everything we do are identified below.



Core Policy: Addressing the climate and nature emergency

Climate change impacts on the current and future wellbeing of local residents, so we need to take urgent action. In 2019, we declared a climate emergency across Bath & North East Somerset. This means change for us all and the council is committed to playing its part. Our Keynsham Civic Centre had the largest solar panel array on a new public building in the country when it was built. We have introduced LED street lighting. Our Energy at Home scheme retrofitted 300 homes and our Plastics Pledge involves local businesses and communities. To build on this we have identified three priority areas for action:

- Energy efficiency improvements to existing buildings and zero carbon for new build
- A major shift to mass transport, walking and cycling to reduce transport emissions
- A rapid and large-scale increase in local renewable energy generation

These have been built into our strategy and are reflected in our key commitments. Our work to address the climate and nature emergency delivers other important benefits - for example, insulating homes both improves public health and creates good local jobs.

We will provide the leadership to help this happen. We will also press for the powers and resources needed from central government. 'Business as usual' is not an option and we need to work together across the public, private and community sectors as well as with our residents to develop solutions together.

Our Climate Emergency webpages have the latest information on our plans and what you can do to help. <https://www.bathnes.gov.uk/climate-emergency>



Core Policy: Giving people a bigger say

Local residents should have a powerful voice in how their services are designed, funded and run. There is more we can do to be transparent and collaborative in the way that we work. We want to make sure we are involving local people, parish councils and others in our decision-making. We need to listen to all our communities, including our younger residents, about the issues that affect their future.

We know that some things are working well already. This includes our Parish Charter and our Area Forums, where public services and local communities meet and talk together.

Our new Community Engagement Charter (in Appendix One) sets out how we will engage and consult with residents in the future, involving them in a clear and meaningful way in council priorities and decision making.

Our [Have Your Say](#) webpages tell you more.

OUR PRINCIPLES AND COMMITMENTS

Three principles drive the commitments in our strategy. These are all set out below.

PRINCIPLE	Preparing for the future	Delivering for local residents	Focusing on prevention
<p>AT-A-GLANCE GUIDE TO COMMITMENTS</p> <p>(More information in each section)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • local renewable energy • high-skill economy • new technologies • green local economy • walking, micro mobility (cycling), car-sharing, buses, and rail • carbon neutral development and energy efficiency retrofitting • natural environment carbon stores and biodiversity e.g. planting more trees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • carbon-neutral, social and affordable housing • energy efficient homes • significant improvement of the transport infrastructure • low traffic neighbourhoods • effective approach to fly-tipping and litter enforcement • Citizens' Juries to improve decision-making • tailor our approach to community engagement in Bath • community engagement charter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • statutory health and care services • preventative approaches • reduce health inequalities • provision for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities • reduce waste, increase recycling and support local litter picking schemes • mental health services that build resilience, promote mental health and wellbeing and deliver the best outcomes • reduce over-reliance on residential and nursing care • build on local strengths

These commitments do not set out in detail everything we do, much of which – such as equalities, safeguarding, registrars and emergency planning - is determined by national legislation. However, the detailed proposals in this document will guide us over the life of the strategy and represent the step changes that citizens in B&NES will experience from their council.

The council will support the most vulnerable, as seen in the support for families welcomed to our area through the Syrian Vulnerable Persons Programme. We also work closely with partners to make our community safer and have made a new and significant commitment to tackling domestic abuse. We will stand up for local people and lobby central government on

the things that matter most to them – for example on replacing the money that is lost through students, rightly, being exempt from council tax. We will seek to influence central government and others where we need to make changes to deliver our Corporate Strategy, for example to address the climate emergency.



Principle: Preparing for the future

Our area is changing. The council must change with it and help local residents prepare for the future. We want to promote high-quality, high-skill jobs, for example in the new green jobs sector and in new technologies. At Bath Quays we are creating a vibrant commercial quarter in the heart of the city which is delivering new jobs and homes. We also have a programme aimed at making our high streets more attractive places to visit, including greener ways of getting around the area and support to businesses.

The council will work with partners, organisations such as the West of England Combined Authority, and local communities to secure long-term investment in our local infrastructure. Our priorities for this are sustainable transport, homes and energy. So that they can take advantage of these changes, we want to help our young people acquire and enhance the skills they need to achieve their ambitions. To do this we will also need to address inequalities of outcome in education, particularly in the Early Years.

The council also needs to make the most of new technology and be smarter and more flexible in the ways that we work. We need to be clearer about what we can and cannot provide. Increasingly, we will ask residents to self-serve for our more transactional services so that we can better support people who need our help the most.

What we are going to do

Our key commitments
Enable a step change in local renewable energy schemes including solar and wind power
Promote a high-skill economy
Maximise opportunities from new technologies to improve and deliver efficient, modern services
Support the transition to a green, local economy
Enable a major shift to walking, micro mobility (cycling), car-sharing, buses, and rail
Encourage a large and rapid improvement in the energy efficiency of our area's buildings through carbon neutral development and energy efficiency retrofitting of the majority of existing building stock
Increase natural environment carbon stores and biodiversity - for example, through planting more trees - and improve our bio-diversity, habitat and land management

Examples of how we are going to measure progress

- Number of buildings retrofitted with energy efficiency measures
- Amount of renewable energy locally generated,
- % population 16-64 in employment,
- % of council transactions digitally enabled



Principle: Delivering for local residents

Access to housing and getting around our area are key local concerns. We are determined to secure more affordable and social housing, improve the quality of rented housing, make our housing stock green and tackle fuel poverty. We will also facilitate significant improvement of the transport infrastructure and encourage behaviour change to forms of transport other than the private vehicle. This will enable a major shift to walking, micro mobility (cycling), car-sharing, buses, and rail.

Alongside the introduction of the Clean Air Zone in November 2020, we have wider ambitions for a more pedestrian-friendly city centre and reducing the impact of cars in residential streets through better traffic management and reductions in 'rat-running'.

To support this, we need to understand the views and needs of our local communities. We are committed to improving how we involve local people in our decision making, such as on local transport schemes, ensuring that they have a greater say in how their services are designed, funded and run.

What we are going to do

Our key commitments

Deliver more **carbon neutral, social and affordable housing** and ensure that our Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMO) policies put communities first

Ensure the council is an exemplar for low carbon, including the delivery of carbon neutral and **energy efficient homes** through our housing company

Facilitate **significant improvement to the transport infrastructure** and encourage behaviour change to forms of transport other than the private vehicle

Introduce '**low traffic neighbourhoods**' working with schools and local communities

Have an **effective approach to fly-tipping and litter enforcement** as well as to city centre cleansing and trade waste

Use new initiatives such as **Citizen's Juries to involve residents in decision making**

Tailor our approach to community engagement in Bath to reflect the needs of the City's residents

Build on our Parish Charter with a new **Community Engagement Charter** which outlines our commitments and framework for engaging with local residents across the whole of the Bath and North East Somerset area

Examples of how we are going to measure progress

- Number of new additional homes
- Number of council homes delivered
- % of residents who feel listened to when they put forward their views



Principle: Focusing on prevention

Having a clear approach to prevention is essential to improving people's health and wellbeing, sustaining the social care and health services we all value and rely on and strengthening our local economy. For example, properly insulated homes are cheaper to run and help prevent cold-related ill health as well as contributing to addressing the climate emergency. Our Clean Air Zone is also a good example of how we are preventing ill health through reducing air pollution.

People should receive the support they need in the most efficient, effective and timely way, reducing demand for later and more costly interventions. Everyone has a part to play and our residents should be supported to stay healthy, live well and be independent for as long as possible, making good choices for their own health and wellbeing. For example, the council can promote active travel such as walking and cycling.

We cannot do this alone and we will need to build on our joint working arrangements with partners, voluntary organisations, parishes and residents, through growing initiatives such as Compassionate Communities. We will always ensure that we continue to protect and support our most vulnerable residents.

What we are going to do

Our key commitments
Deliver statutory health and care services for children and adults as effectively as possible
Prioritise preventative approaches so that people can stay healthy, we can tackle issues at the earliest stage and ensure a better quality of life for our local residents
Promote good health and reduce health inequalities
Enhance local provision for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) to reduce the need for more distant and costly specialist placements
Help our residents to reduce waste, increase recycling and support local litter picking schemes
Ensure we have mental health services that build resilience, promote mental health and wellbeing and deliver the best outcomes for our residents
Support our residents to live well and independently, so we reduce over-reliance on residential and nursing care
Support communities who want to address issues of concern by listening to residents and build on local strengths and resources

Some examples of how we are going to measure progress

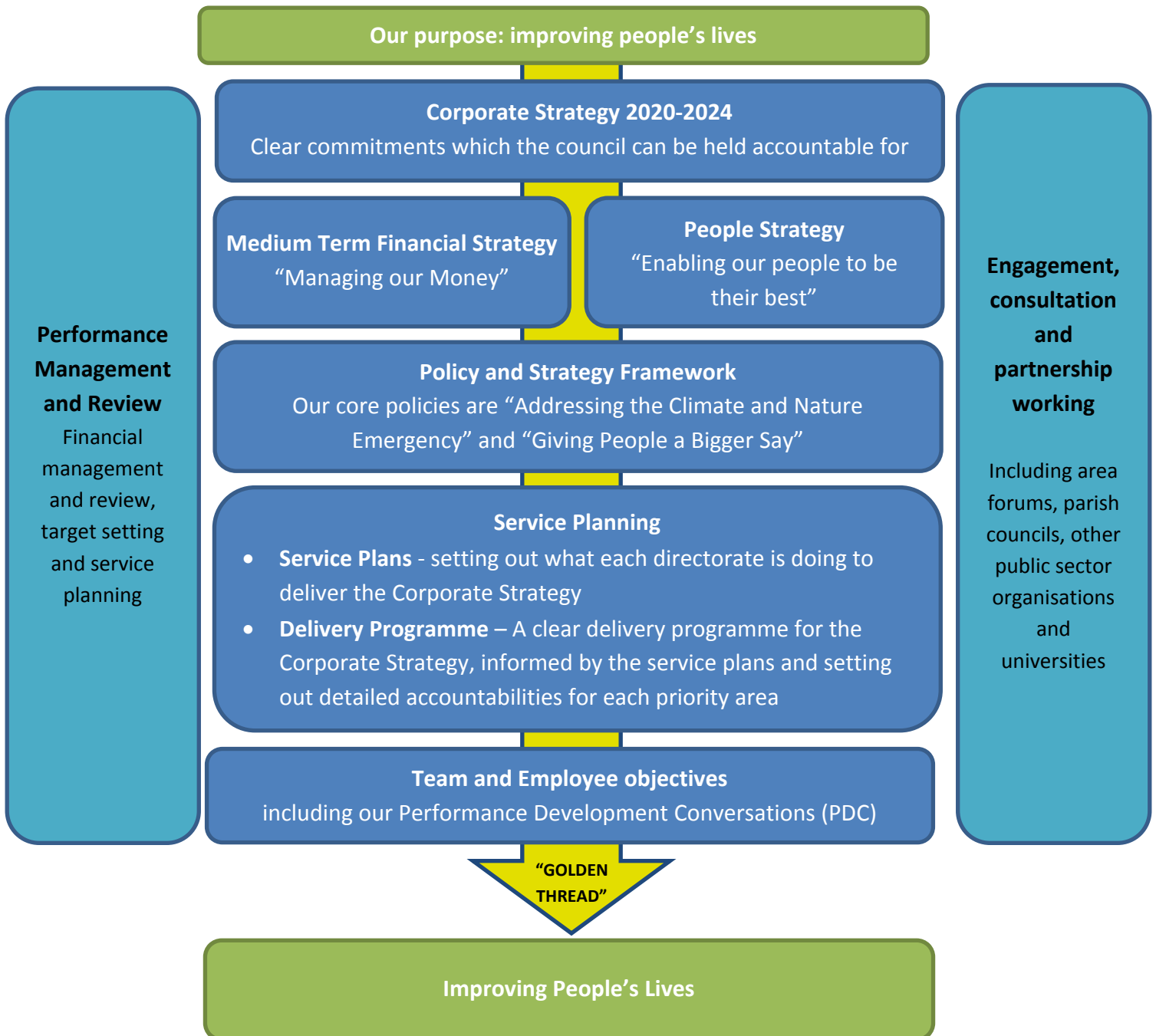
- % initial contacts resolved at first point of contact
- % clients still independent after receiving an enablement service
- Number of admissions to permanent residential and nursing care for older people

DELIVERING THE STRATEGY

The 'Golden Thread'

The Corporate Strategy sets out our high-level commitments. But this needs to be translated into action through a 'golden thread' to our service plans and individual employee objectives.

B&NES Council Corporate Strategy Framework



How we will work

Service planning and performance management

Every year a Corporate Delivery Programme will set out how precisely the council plans to deliver on this strategy. This will be available online and will also report on progress in delivering our commitments, ensuring that we are transparent and accountable.

Our Policy Development and Scrutiny Panels also have a key role in monitoring delivery of the Corporate Strategy as well as carrying out their policy development role as the strategy develops and is implemented.

Managing our money

We have highlighted the financial challenges facing the authority. We must balance our budget every year and prioritise our spending so we can secure our services and invest in our commitments.

Our Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) shows how we will do this, maximising commercial income, and reviewing our contracts to make savings. We have also launched a new corporate programme – Improving How We Work – which will:

- Simplify the ways in which services are delivered, removing costly and time-consuming processes that don't serve our citizens
- Give local people the tools to access council services online wherever possible, freeing up resources to help those who need it most
- Enable smarter, more flexible working and making sure we have the right office space and tools to do the job whilst also reducing our carbon footprint.

We are committed to being a modern council which meets the needs of people today and in the future with the funding available to us. So the MTFS also sets out the need for us to go further, managing demand and reducing costs based on Value for Money assessments of our services. Over the life of this strategy we will therefore:

- A) Develop preventative approaches which enable people to remain independent and healthy and reduce demand for high cost adult social care services, including:-
 - Working to better understand why our care costs appear higher than similar authorities and creating a strategy to tackle the pressure on our budgets
 - Exploring the best way to deliver these services
 - Strengthening our approach to reablement
- B) Re-shape the way we work with children, young people and families in order to reduce demand for high cost, specialist children's social care placements, including:-
 - Exploring the best way to deliver these services
 - Changing the service model so there is greater continuity of social worker
 - Re-uniting children in care with their families where this is the most appropriate outcome

- C) Improve our city and town centres so it works better for local residents and businesses, including:-
- Ensuring a long-term approach to car parking which meets the climate emergency
 - Reviewing the assets we own so that they generate good future income for our services
 - Ensuring our Clean Air Zone and Transport Study for Bath unlock investment to enable us to deliver our vision for walking, micro mobility (cycling), car sharing, buses and rail and cleaner, greener, safer city and town centres for everyone
- D) Establish better area-based approaches that deliver what citizens need at a local level, including:-
- Streamlining points of contact with the council so people aren't pushed from "pillar to post"
 - Bringing together different services to reduce duplication
 - Ensuring services are shaped by what people need rather than what we've always done

To deliver these changes, we may need to invest "up-front" to realise savings or generate income from new ways of working. These changes must be well-planned so that changes made in one service don't create costs elsewhere and so that local needs and concerns are met.

Our people

The council is a people business. We deliver services for people by people, so we need to provide the right culture, leadership and environment for our staff to deliver the best outcomes for residents.

Our People Strategy supports the development and effective management of our workforce. It ensures that we are recruiting and retaining staff with the right skills and support to do their jobs. We know that our employees will perform best if they are safe, happy and engaged at work and we are committed to building an inclusive culture where everyone feels able to participate and achieve their best.

Our partners

We cannot deliver this strategy alone as we don't control all the areas that we need to influence. Many of our ambitions, particularly addressing the climate emergency, don't stop at our boundaries.

We have a long history of collaboration with local partners, voluntary groups and communities and are proud to work with many organisations to improve people's lives. Our ground-breaking Community Safety and Safeguarding Partnership is one of the first in the country to bring together these functions to help focus resources on supporting vulnerable people. Our Third Sector Group (3SG) reflects our thriving voluntary and community sector and we are working with them on projects such as Compassionate Communities.

However, big changes have taken place in recent years. This includes the development of a West of England Combined Authority and governance changes in our health and care system. In addition, the Western Gateway reflects the key links between our area, the West of England and South Wales. We are committed therefore to being a good partner, where this helps us to deliver the Corporate Strategy and make real improvements for local people.

APPENDIX ONE – Draft Community Engagement Charter for Bath and North East Somerset Council

About the Charter

The views of our community are essential in helping to inform the decision-making process of Bath & North East Somerset Council. The community comprises of residents including children and young people, parish and town councils, third sector organisations including voluntary and community groups and businesses.

We want to ensure that we provide an extensive and meaningful programme of engagement and, when we consult on decisions, that we do this in a timely, clear and transparent way.

Our Community Engagement Charter sets out our standards for how we engage with our community.

The Charter applies to all council staff and councillors. Partner organisations and contractors of the council will also be encouraged to adopt this approach.

1. Our Community Engagement Charter

Building on good practice and learning from our shared past experiences, we have worked with our community partners to develop a set of reciprocal expectations. We want to ensure that we provide a genuine opportunity to work in partnership with our community. This will enable all to participate in more detailed discussions and consultations.

Our Standards:

We will:

- consult on decisions in **a meaningful way**.
- recognise the **demographic and geographical differences** across our communities.
- ensure we give full consideration to addressing the **climate emergency** when we plan our community engagement and consultation approaches.
- ensure we understand the **diverse needs** of our communities.
- identify, engage and **involve all relevant stakeholder groups**.
- work with the third sector to **engage hard to reach groups**.
- ensure we **plan and engage early** to encourage ‘**good conversations**’ and **build strong relationships**.
- **utilise existing engagement** mechanisms including the area forums and parish liaison and **explore new opportunities to engage**.
- be **clear in our communications** using plain English and avoiding jargon.
- be clear about **what we are aiming to achieve**, what decisions are being consulted on and who will make the final decision.
- ensure that there is **enough time given** for the community to consider and respond to consultations.
- **ensure feedback** is given following consultation so that the community understand why we have taken the decision.

2. Types of Engagement

‘Engagement’ encompasses a range of activity involving the community in issues about their local area of which consultation is only one element. We recognise the different needs of our community and therefore we will adopt a range of methods and activities for our engagement.

“The Spectrum of Public Participation” below illustrates the different levels of impact and types of engagement that could be considered.

Spectrum of Participation* <i>Increasing the level of participation</i>					
	Inform	Consult (See Section 3 below)	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Examples of engagement methods the council may consider in its approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Websites • Social media • e-newsletters • Displays • Press Releases • CC Forums • Parish Liaison 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surveys • Voicebox • Consultations (e-consult and paper) • Public meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops • Community Events • CC Forums • Parish Liaison • Advisory Groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peoples Panels • Citizen Panels/ Advisory Committees • Participatory decision making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Citizens Juries • Delegated decisions

*Source <https://www.iap2.org>.

3. When and how we will consult

It is important that when we consult we set out clearly why we are consulting, how we plan to consult and how the community can respond and that afterwards we provide feedback on our decisions.

There is a legal requirement for all councils to consult where there is a legitimate expectation for this to happen. This applies when;

- there has been a clear promise of consultation;
- official guidance or policies imply a promise to act in a particular way;
- there is a withdrawal of a benefit with significant impacts to be considered;
- the nature of the relationship would create unfairness if there were to be inadequate consultation.

4. Constraints

Not all council decisions can be determined solely by responses from public discussion. Some are governed by statutory requirements, some are limited by financial constraints and some involve a range of other factors that require detailed consideration.

We will ensure that any consultation will last a proportionate amount of time, taking account of legislation, nature and impact of the proposal.

If any or all of these limitations are likely to apply we will undertake to make the details available at an early stage.

Those decisions that may have a specific legislative framework which exist within an individual service area or for certain proposed changes such as with Planning and Highways, these areas will have clear guidelines for consultation.

The Planning department has its own set of minimum standards; these are outlined in the planning policy called Statement of Community Involvement.

Summary

The council will build on-going relationships with the community and make sure its understanding of communities' views are reflected in all of its decisions. We will:-

- * discuss a proposal when it is at a formative stage.
- * provide sufficient information to allow intelligent consideration.
- * ensure there is adequate time for a considered response.
- * conscientiously take responses into account.
- * provide feedback on our decisions.

We want to give our residents a greater say. We need our community to tell us about issues that matter most to them and respond to consultations which will help inform our decision making.

5. Getting in touch

If you have a question regarding the Charter or you feel that a consultation hasn't followed the Charter, please contact us.

In order to ensure the Charter remains up to date, we will carry out periodic reviews and ensure any feedback that we received will be considered in any future updates.

Website: <https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/have-your-say>

Phone: [01225 394041](tel:01225394041)

Email: Connecting_Communities@bathnes.gov.uk

The council would like to acknowledge and thank members of the Connecting Communities Forums and the 3SG who have participated in developing this Charter and in particular the work undertaken by members of Bath City Forum who initiated the discussions.