Consultation Responses and Revisions to the Strategic Plan (2022-26)
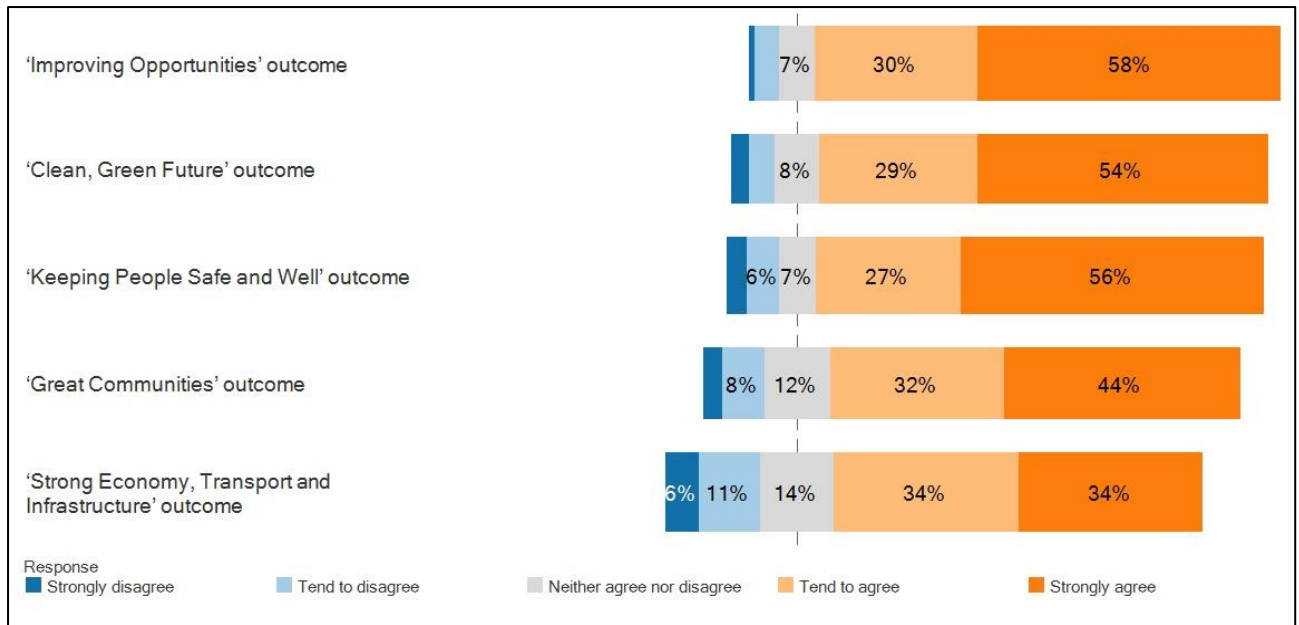
Format and Structure

1.   During consultation, there was a view that the Plan was too long and that detail about the Council's actions could be set out separately. Some also commented that whilst the Plan identified what success would look like, it did not adequately quantify this or set a benchmark against which performance could be measured.

2.   In addition, some stated that the Plan included aspirations which were outside the Council's control. Recognising that the Council often has a broader role as a partner, enabler and facilitator, it was suggested that the Plan should more clearly differentiate between those aspirations for which the Council would have lead responsibility, and those where it would have a contributing/partnership role; specifying which partners it would work with to deliver the actions in the Plan. Some also challenged the lack of reference to district and borough councils.

3.   Response to this feedback:

- The length of the Plan has been reduced by cutting down on unnecessary text and merging or removing aims and actions where appropriate. Further, images have been added to improve the visual appeal of the document.
- Quantitative targets tend to be established through annual service planning processes and supporting strategies, as this allows for the targets to reflect current service capacity and pressures. However, quantitative targets have now been added for some aims in the Plan such as those around CO_2 emissions and the supporting families programme. Additionally, to provide greater clarity on what the Council is aiming to achieve by 2026, the Plan also now includes, under 'how we will measure success', the key performance indicators which will be monitored to identify if each aim is being achieved. Finally, it should be noted that each sub-outcome in the Plan includes a summary of current performance, which can be used as a benchmark against which to measure future progress.
- The Plan refers to the need for the Council to 'work with partners' to deliver certain actions and now includes a definition (in the glossary) of 'partners'. It also now refers to collaboration with specific partners, such as district councils, to deliver specific actions. Further, the Plan highlights effective collaboration with district councils. For example, the introduction to the *'Great Communities'* outcome sets out the Council's desire to build upon successful partnerships, such as work with district councils during the Covid-19 pandemic, to establish community hubs to support vulnerable people.

Vision

4. There was a high level of support for the Council's vision. Of the 259 public survey respondents, 79% agreed with the outcomes, with 42% strongly agreeing. Similarly, 79% agreed with the vision statement, with 39% strongly agreeing. Only 10% disagreed. There was particularly strong support for the following outcomes:

    - *'Improving Opportunities'*: 88% agreed, of which 58% strongly agreed
    - *'Clean, Green Future'*: 83% agreed, of which 54% strongly agreed
    - *'Keeping People Safe and Well'*: 83% agreed, of which 56% strongly agreed

5. However, there was less, albeit still substantial, support for the following outcomes:

    - *'Great Communities'*: 76% agreed, of which 44% strongly agreed
    - *'Strong Economy, Transport and Infrastructure'*: 68% agreed, of which 34% strongly agreed (notably 17% disagreed)

6. As will be shown in the relevant sub-section below, it appears that the primary reasons for the lower level of support for the *'Strong Economy, Transport and Infrastructure'* outcome were concerns that housing development would have a negative impact on the environment and may not be accompanied by necessary infrastructure (e.g. schools and public transport networks).

7. Whilst there was significant support for the vision statement (particularly the references to inclusivity, greener living and healthy communities), some stated that it did not add value, as the vision was already summarised by the five outcomes.

Chart 1: The extent to which public survey respondents agreed or disagreed with each outcome

Outcome	Strongly disagree	Tend to disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to agree	Strongly agree
'Improving Opportunities' outcome			7%	30%	58%
'Clean, Green Future' outcome	8%		29%		54%
'Keeping People Safe and Well' outcome	6%	7%	27%		56%
'Great Communities' outcome	8%		12%	32%	44%
'Strong Economy, Transport and Infrastructure' outcome	6%	11%	14%	34%	34%

Response
- Strongly disagree
- Tend to disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Tend to agree
- Strongly agree

8. Response to this feedback:

- See relevant sub-sections below for response on specific outcomes.
- Removed the single-line vision statement

Clean, Green Future

9. The *'Clean, Green Future'* outcome aims for the environment to be protected and to tackle climate change, biodiversity loss and unsustainable resource usage. There was a high level of support for this outcome, as well as for the specific aims which the Council intended to achieve by 2026 to progress towards it. Over 90% of survey respondents rated each of the aims as either 'fairly important' or 'very important'.

10. There were, however, concerns that the outcome may not be compatible with the Council's aims to support housing and infrastructure development.

    Other requests included:

    - Enable and promote sustainable transport
    - Attract 'green' / environmentally-friendly businesses
    - Educate residents on climate change
    - Reduce the volume of waste produced locally
    - Work with farmers to tackle climate change
    - Remove reference to installation of new gas boilers

11. Response to this feedback:

- Outcome name revised to *'Clean and Green'* to ensure consistency following changes to the names of other outcomes (set out in sub-sections below).
- The Introduction / Foreword now acknowledges the challenges involved in supporting economic growth whilst achieving a *'Clean and Green'* future for Leicestershire and highlights how the Council intends to achieve this.
- Further actions have been added to sub-outcomes 4.1 (community action to tackle climate change), 4.4 (low carbon economy) and 7.2 (sustainable infrastructure) to show how the Council will enable and promote cycling and walking through enhanced infrastructure, cycle information and training, as well as and work with partners to improve bus and rail services.
- An action has been added to sub-outcome 4.4 (low carbon economy) to work with partners to enhance the capacity of SMEs to supply low-carbon products and services, expand links between businesses and universities to enhance low-carbon research and development and develop a central integrated hub for demonstration of low-carbon technology.
- The Plan includes an action (sub-outcome 4.1) to raise environmental awareness amongst communities and businesses to promote positive action.
- The Plan now includes under sub-outcome 4.3 (sustainable resource usage) actions to reduce the volume of waste produced in Leicestershire, including supporting the national Love Food Hate Waste campaign, delivering food waste prevention classes and providing a SHIRE Environment Grant scheme to enable communities to conduct their own waste prevention activities.
- The Plan includes an action under sub-outcome 4.2 (nature) to support sustainable farming practices which maintain and enhance biodiversity.
- Removed the reference under sub-outcome 4.1 (community action to tackle climate change) to installing new gas boilers through Warm Homes. The action is now to support people to be more efficient in energy and water use.
- Further detail on how the Council will deliver the actions above will be set out in relevant supporting strategies such as the Council's Environment Strategy.

Great Communities

12. The *'Great Communities'* outcome aims for inclusive communities in which people support each other and participate in service design and delivery. Whilst most agreed with the outcome, there was varied support for the Council's aims by 2026.

13. There was significant support for the aims to:

- Ensure Council services are accessible and inclusive

- Support the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector
- Increase community cohesion and tackling hate crime
- Increase the % of residents who feel they can influence Council decisions

14. However, there was less support for the aims to:

- Increase engagement in cultural and heritage activities
- Sustain the increase in volunteering seen during the pandemic
- Increase the number of Neighbourhood Plans adopted
- Increase the number of active Community Response Plans

15. Similarly, during the 3 staff briefings on the draft revised Strategic Plan, the aim around cultural and heritage activities was consistently seen as the least important.

16. Feedback suggested that the aim to sustain a high rate of volunteering was perceived by some to indicate the Council attempting to shift its responsibilities onto unpaid volunteers. Some requested that the Plan highlight the role of Councillors in enabling residents to influence Council decisions. There was also a view that the action under sub-outcome 5.2 (public participation) to support town and parish councils indicated insufficient acknowledgement of 'non-parished' areas.

17. Response to this feedback:

- A sentence has been added under sub-outcome 5.4 (volunteering) to clarify that the Council aims to support volunteering opportunities and activity as it recognises the significant contribution which volunteers make in delivering wider community benefit beyond the Council's direct service provision.
- Revised wording of the aim for a 'sustained increase in volunteering post-pandemic' to read 'There is a wide variety of volunteering opportunities and activity across Council services'. This reflects feedback that the aims should be more focused on areas over which the Council has direct control.
- The aim under sub-outcome 5.2 (public participation) to 'increase the number of Neighbourhood Plans adopted' has been removed, as feedback suggests that this was not seen as important, and it was challenged on the basis that it is not a County Council function. The Plan still, however, includes an action for the Council to support development of Neighbourhood Plans as this helps to achieve the aim of 'increasing the proportion of residents who feel they can influence Council decisions'.
- The Plan now refers in sub-outcome 5.2 (public participation) to the role of County Councillors in representing the needs and interests of residents. However, it sets out the Council's desire to improve how it

engages with residents in service design and delivery so that more residents feel they can influence Council decisions.

- The actions in sub-outcome 5.2 (public participation) show how the Council intends to engage <u>all</u> residents in service design and delivery – not just those from areas with a Town or Parish Council. To further emphasise this, the action to support town and parish councils in their roles as providers of community-managed services and community leaders has been expanded to include supporting the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector, which covers both 'parished' and 'non-parished' areas.

<u>Improving Opportunities</u>

18. The *'Improving Opportunities'* outcome aims for every child to get the best start for life with access to a good quality education and for everyone to have the opportunities they need to fulfil their potential. It was the most popular outcome, with each of the Council's aims to deliver it rated as either fairly or very important by over 90% of survey respondents, and over 60% rating each aim as 'very important'.

19. However, some suggested that the outcome may not be achievable due to reductions in youth and education services. There was also a view that to deliver the outcome mainstream schools would need more resources to support children with special educational needs who have an Education, Health and Care Plan.

20. Although the emphasis on children and families was welcomed, there was a view that the outcome should also focus on supporting young people and adults to access education and employment opportunities.

21. Other requests included:

- Promote alternative career paths to university (e.g. vocational routes)
- Highlight the role of libraries (e.g. reading sessions for children)
- Add more detail on how families will be supported to be self-sufficient
- Revise targets around post-16 outcomes to be more ambitious
- Revise outcome name to 'Improved Opportunities' to support consistency

22. Response to this feedback:

- The name of the outcome has been revised to *'Improved Opportunities'*.
- The Council's aims to progress towards this outcome by 2026 are considered realistic and attainable, despite funding pressures.
- The Plan highlights the Council's intention for most children with special educational needs (SEND) to have their needs met in a mainstream school setting at the lower level of support (SEN Support). It also includes an action to help ensure mainstream schools have the resources to promote inclusion.

- Sub-outcome 6.4, 'everyone is able to aim high and reach their full potential', has been revised to read 'young people and adults are able to aim high and reach their full potential' to reflect that it is focused on ensuring people can access education and employment from age 16 onwards.
- The Council is keen to promote youth pathways into employment including academic and vocational routes. The Plan includes under sub-outcome 6.4 actions to ensure young people receive individualised careers guidance and can access alternative education providers if formal education is not suitable. There are also actions under sub-outcome 7.1 (skills) to help improve further education facilities and promote apprenticeships. An action has been added to this sub-outcome to 'be a delivery partner with the European Social Fund Employment Hub (until 2023) which promotes apprenticeship opportunities to businesses'. Additionally, an action has been added to sub-outcome 6.4 (post-16 outcomes) to work with partners through the Local Enterprise Partnership to support the Enterprise Adviser Network which inspires and prepares young people for the world of work, by linking business/employer volunteers (Enterprise Advisers) with schools and colleges.
- The aims to progress towards sub-outcome 6.4 (post-16 outcomes) by 2026 have been revised to be more ambitious. They now aim for Leicestershire to be in the best performing 25% of counties for the rate of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET), to remain in the best performing 25% of counties for the percentage of people with learning disabilities who in paid employment and the percentage who are living independently. The sub-outcome also includes an aim for the percentages of people in contact with secondary mental health services who are in paid employment / living independently to be above the national average – this is because Leicestershire performs below the national average in this area currently, so it is considered realistic and achievable (i.e. not too ambitious) to aim for above the national average in this specific area by 2026
- The Plan now includes under sub-outcomes 6.1 (early years) and 7.1 (skills) actions to provide learning opportunities through libraries and adult learning.
- The Plan sets out under sub-outcome 6.3 (family resilience) how the Council will support families to be resilient and self-sufficient. This includes providing information and advice, supporting families in a crisis, early identification and prevention and assisting families who decide to educate their child at home.

Strong Economy, Transport and Infrastructure

23. The *'Strong Economy, Transport and Infrastructure'* outcome aspires for Leicestershire to have a productive, inclusive and sustainable economy and infrastructure which meets the demands of a growing population and economy.

24. As outlined previously, it was consistently the least popular of the 5 outcomes. Public survey feedback considered the aim around housing development to be the least important, with 42% respondents describing it as either not at all important (23%) or not very important (19%). During both the public survey and the 3 County Council staff briefings on the Plan, this aim was consistently rated as the least important of all aims in the Plan.

25. There was also relatively low support for the aims to support Research and Development (R&D), increase the number of businesses in Leicestershire and ensure there are sufficient employment sites for growth. However, there was a high level of support for increasing labour market opportunities for young people, addressing skills shortages, supporting inclusive economic growth, and ensuring infrastructure supports growth and net zero emissions.

26. It seems that the aim to support housing development was least popular due to concerns that it would undermine delivery of a 'Clean and Green' future in Leicestershire due to the building of new houses in greenfield areas. This led some to request clarification on which is a greater priority to the Council between 'green' and 'growth'. There were also concerns that new houses may not be supported by necessary infrastructure (e.g. schools, health facilities and public transport).

27. There was also a frequent theme around the need to better enable and promote sustainable transport, such as cycling and walking as well as affordable and frequent buses and trains. It was suggested that achieving the aims for this outcome would require investment in this area to avoid excessive congestion.

28. Other requests included:

    • Highlight the role of libraries in supporting skills and employment
    • Clarify how the Council will support green technologies
    • Build networks between schools and employers to address skills gaps
    • Encourage businesses to commit to more apprenticeships
    • Focus less on supporting logistics sector and more on growth sectors

29. Response to this feedback:

    • Removed the sub-outcome around housing, with the key actions to support housing development shown instead to support the infrastructure sub-outcome (7.2). This reflects the low popularity of the aims around housing, as well as the fact that the planning of housing is a district council responsibility rather than the County Council. Further, listing the actions to support housing provision in the sub-outcome around infrastructure highlights that the Council considers the wider infrastructure requirements of housing developments.
    • Removed the aim 'sufficient employment sites and premises for growth'
    • The Introduction / Foreword now acknowledges the challenges involved in supporting economic growth whilst achieving a 'Clean and

Green' future for Leicestershire and highlights how the Council intends to achieve this.

- Actions have been added to sub-outcome 7.2 (infrastructure) for the Council to enable and promote cycling and walking through enhanced infrastructure and to deliver a Bus Service Improvement Plan as well as work with Midlands Connect to improve passenger rail services.
- Sub-outcome 7.1 (skills) highlights the role of libraries in supporting skills.
- Sub-outcome 4.4 (low carbon economy) includes an action to work with partners to develop the training and skills routes required for zero carbon development. It also includes a new action to work with partners to enhance the capacity of SMEs to supply low-carbon products and services, expand links between businesses and universities to enhance low-carbon research and development and develop a hub to demonstrate low-carbon technology
- Sub-outcome 7.1 (skills) includes an action to provide information, advice and guidance on the labour market to parents, teachers and young people – this may help to build networks between schools and businesses. This sub-outcome also includes an action to help develop an Apprenticeship Action Plan which will help increase apprenticeship opportunities in the county. A further action has been added to sub-outcome 6.4 (post-16 outcomes) for the Council to work with partners through the Local Enterprise Partnership to support the Enterprise Adviser Network which inspires and prepares young people for the world of work, by linking business/ employer volunteers (Enterprise Advisers) with local schools and colleges.
- Logistics and manufacturing are key economic sectors in Leicestershire. The Council aims to support these sectors and other growth sectors such as life sciences, low carbon technologies, creative industries and aerospace.

Keeping People Safe and Well

30. The *'Keeping People Safe and Well'* outcome aims for the people of Leicestershire to be safe and protected from harm and to have the opportunities and support they need to take control of their health and wellbeing.

31. There was a high level of support for this outcome and for all the Council's aims to progress towards it by 2026, with over 90% public survey respondents agreeing with each aim and the majority 'strongly agreeing'. There was significant support for each aim, particularly those focused on community safety, vulnerable people, mental wellbeing, unpaid carers and care experiences. The aim with the least support was for more residents to be a healthy weight.

32. Some questioned the level of influence which the County Council has over areas such as crime levels, preventing young people from engaging in criminal activity and increasing the proportion of residents with a healthy weight. It was highlighted that achieving these aims would require

partnership-working with other public agencies such as the NHS, Police and district councils and that the aim around healthy weight would rely on individuals taking responsibility for their own wellbeing.

33. There was also a view that the Plan should outline how the Council is intending to support road safety, such as through education and highway design. Further, some requested clarification on how the Council would address substance misuse. Additionally, there was a request to highlight how the Council would promote access to green space in order to support its aims around wellbeing.

34. Other requests included:

- Revise outcome name to *'Safe and Well'* for consistency
- Involve unpaid carers in service design and support them to make their views known by advocating for them
- Highlight how sustainable transport supports wellbeing
- Invest in the training of the social care workforce
- Refer to tackling scammers and fraud
- Strengthen reference to meeting accommodation needs of frail and/or disabled people; and making properties accessible during development
- Increase reference to usage of assistive digital technology

35. Response to this feedback:
- Outcome name revised to *'Safe and Well'* – note this change also led to the *'Clean, Green Future'* outcome being re-named to *'Clean and Green'*
- Highlighted the specific partner agencies which the Council will need to work with to deliver the aims for this outcome and removed the aim for 'less crime and fear of crime', recognising that this is a Police responsibility. This aim is now instead focused on ensuring more residents feel safe in their local area.
- Actions added to sub-outcome 8.1 (community safety) to support road safety such as delivering the Safety Camera Scheme, Driver Education Workshops, Community Speed Enforcement and develop a Road Safety Strategy
- An action has been added to sub-outcome 8.3 (public health / wellbeing) to 'Deliver our Substance Misuse Strategy (2020-23) to support people to make informed healthy lifestyle choices to reduce the harm caused by alcohol and drug misuse and improve their wellbeing'.
- An action has been added to sub-outcome 8.3 (public health / wellbeing) to 'Ensure that residential planning applications by the County Council for its land enable public access to green space, and support district and borough councils to develop plans to improve public access to green space'. Also added under 'how we will measure success' is a new performance indicator showing levels of public access to green space.

- An action under sub-outcome 8.4 (care experiences) has been revised to 'Provide opportunities for carers to inform and shape service development'.
- Highlighted in sub-outcome 8.3 (public health / wellbeing) that we are living in an obesogenic environment, with an abundance of energy dense food, motorised transport and sedentary lifestyles. Added that there is a need to work with partners to improve the healthy weight environment such as by promoting sustainable/active travel, reducing the number of fast food outlets and providing people with skills and resources to cook and eat healthily
- A further action has been added to sub-outcome 8.4 (care experiences) for the Council to 'Recruit and train an appropriately skilled and resilient social care workforce, whilst inspiring more people to work in the sector and improving job satisfaction through rewarding careers and opportunities'
- Sub-outcome 8.1 (community safety) includes actions to work with partners to raise awareness of and tackle scammers and rogue traders who exploit vulnerable consumers and to enforce food and product safety standards
- Sub-outcome 7.2 (infrastructure) now highlights that the number of older people living in Leicestershire is forecast to increase significantly and that this will necessitate the development of housing which is accessible for those who are frail and/or disabled. It also includes a revised action to deliver our Social Care Investment Plan to secure suitable accommodation choices for social care service users, including those who are frail and/or disabled.
- Sub-outcome 8.4 (care experiences) includes an action to 'provide effective crisis response, reablement services, equipment, and technology to enable people to be self-reliant' and a new action has been added to 'work with partners to develop an outcomes-led technology service which provides carers and/or those with care needs with the right technology and guides people to technology which can enable them to live independently for longer'

Strategic Change Portfolio

36. The Strategic Plan also includes a section on the Council's internal transformation programme, the Strategic Change Portfolio. This outlines the purpose, aims and actions of the 'four pillars' of this programme: Sustainable Finances, Carbon Reduction, Customer and Digital and Ways of Working.

37. During the consultation, there was a concern raised by the Leicestershire Equality Challenge Group (LECG) and others that increased adoption of digital services through the Customer and Digital Programme may lead to 'digital exclusion' whereby some people are unable to access services due to lack of digital technology and/or digital skills. It was suggested that this could exacerbate social and economic inequalities. There was a request to reflect how the Council will support digital participation for all and to include actions to ensure everyone can access reliable broadband and learn how to use digital technology.

38. Response to this feedback:

- Increased adoption of digital services through the Customer and Digital Programme is about making the online customer journeys easy to use so that services are easier to access. Sub-section 9.2 of the Plan (the Customer and Digital Programme) includes an action to understand and mitigate the impact of digitalisation and channel development on groups with protected characteristics. A new action has been added to ensure services are accessible through multiple channels (e.g. mediated digital access, telephone support and face-to-face channels) so that no groups are excluded. A further action has been added to develop a community-based programme to support residents to learn how to use digital technology.

- The Strategic Plan also highlights under sub-outcome 7.2 (infrastructure) the 'digital divide' caused by differential access to reliable broadband. There is an action to work with partners through the Local Enterprise Partnership to improve broadband, Wi- Fi and 5G connectivity across Leicestershire and define and implement the Council's first digital connectivity strategy.