



OPEN REPORT GOVERNANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Governance and Resources Committee – 14 September 2023

DEVELOPMENT OF THE DERBYSHIRE DALES PLAN 2024-28

Report of the Director of Regeneration and Policy

Report Author and Contact Details

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Wards Affected

District-wide

Report Summary

The Derbyshire Dales Plan (corporate plan) is the District Council's primary policy document. It establishes the Council's policies and priorities for the coming years and sets the framework for allocating scarce financial and human resources through the forthcoming budget and service planning process.

This report includes the results of extensive consultation with Derbyshire Dales residents, as well as an independent evidence base that objectively sets out statistics about the District Council's area.

The report reiterates the commitments of the Council's leadership. Finally, the report sets out for approval a process and timescale for completing the new Derbyshire Dales Plan for the period 2024-2028.

Recommendations

1. That the the evidence base set out in Appendix 2 and summarised in section 2(D) of the report be received and used to inform corporate prioritisation and planning
2. That the residents consultation results set out in Appendix 1 and summarised in sections 2(C) and 2(E) of the report be received and used to inform corporate prioritisation and planning
3. That corporate prioritisation and planning should take into account staffing levels and financial resources
4. That the process and timescale for completing the development and adoption of the Derbyshire Dales Plan set out in the report be agreed.

List of Appendices

Appendix 1 Residents Survey Report

Appendix 2 Evidence Base Derbyshire Dales Data

Background Papers

Council, 24 November 2022

Council Approval Required

Yes

Exempt from Press or Public

No

Development of the Derbyshire Dales Plan 2024-28

1 Background

- 1.1 The Corporate Plan sets out the aims of the District Council for the coming years, and lists the key improvement projects. The Plan is the over-arching strategy for the District Council as it sets out specific areas to maintain and improve service delivery in the coming years.
- 1.2 The current Corporate Plan was adopted by Council in March 2020 and has three themes:
 - *People* – providing you with a high quality **customer experience**
 - *Place* – keeping the Derbyshire Dales **clean, green and safe**
 - *Prosperity* – supporting better **homes and jobs** for you.
- 1.3 Derbyshire Dales District Council has limited human and financial resources with which to deliver its statutory and discretionary services and initiatives. Despite being one of the smallest principal councils in the country, the Council has succeeded in delivering significant projects and services; but only by carefully prioritising what it does, when it does it, and to what level it.
- 1.4 With the election of a new administration in May 2023, it is necessary to identify what the District Council's highest priority services and projects are for the future, and ensure that the Council aligns its budgets to deliver these. The preparation of a new corporate plan provides the opportunity to **set out the District Councils priority services and projects**, and to **ensure that appropriate budgetary and staffing provision is made** to deliver these. It then provides a yardstick against which progress over the coming years can be measured.
- 1.5 This report sets out work to date on the new corporate plan, including the extensive consultation and hard evidence gathering that has been undertaken to help inform Members' prioritisation, alongside the new administration's own aspirations. It seeks agreement to the remaining process and timescale for developing and adopting the new plan.
- 1.6 In doing so, it is proposed that the corporate plan now be termed the **Derbyshire Dales Plan**. This would better reflect the fact that the plan is largely outward-looking: it is not just a plan for the Council but mostly it is the Council's vision for the Derbyshire Dales.

2 Key Issues

2A PREPARING THE DERBYSHIRE DALES PLAN

2.1 Council on 24 November 2022 considered and agreed the initial steps for the preparation of new Corporate Plan for the period 2024 and beyond, taking into account staff and financial resources. This followed an informal cross-party 'sounding board' session with Members on 18 October 2022.

- *analysis of social, economic and environmental data (a 'hard' evidence base)*
- *consultation with residents, both through a large-scale survey and face-to-face discussions to refine specific priorities*
- *consultation with and amongst Members, before and after May 2023*
- *consultation with staff, businesses and partners/stakeholders.*

An informal 'sounding board' of Members is involved in the development of survey questions. Moreover, it is proposed that a member Corporate Plan Working Group be constituted in May 2023 to steer the process of developing a new Corporate Plan. It is also proposed that all-Member workshops are held in summer/autumn 2023 to give all Members of the new Council an opportunity to be involved.

2.2 Consulting residents, Members and staff on their views on the relative importance of District Council services and their satisfaction with those services, plus gathering their aspirations for the future, gives the Council an important steer on the direction of travel it needs to take. It indicates priority areas for improvement and helps direct where the District Council can focus its energies in terms of future service delivery and policy development.

Progress since November 2022

2.3 Marketing Means were appointed to undertake the **Residents Survey**, and this has now been completed. This generated 1,977 responses, which is well in excess of the 1,500 target response.

2.4 To complement the residents survey, KADA Research Limited were appointed to collate social, economic and environmental statistical data. This acts as a quantitative **evidence base** to demonstrate, impartially, what are the key issues facing the Derbyshire Dales, and as importantly what are not key issues for the district.

2.5 A **staff workshop** took place on 30th June 2023. A separate **workshop for Senior Managers** was held on 3rd July. These workshops shared information from the Leaders Statement, evidence base and the residents survey, and asked for contributions as to what projects for the next four years staff could suggest. It included a fictional budget setting exercise. The staff session ran with minimal involvement from senior managers and was a chance to express views openly.

- 2.6 Focus groups with **members of the public** took place on 25 July (Matlock) and 26 July (Ashbourne). These also shared information from the Leaders Statement, evidence base and the residents survey, and included a fictional budget setting exercise. The attendees provided valuable insight into residents' priorities, and as such provides helpful context to the results of the residents survey.
- 2.7 A **Corporate Plan Working Group** was established by the Progressive Alliance in July 2023. This comprises Councillors David Hughes and Simon Ripton. The Working Group has met and has been consulted during the preparation of this report.

Next steps

- 2.7 **Members workshops** have been organised for October. The first session on 19 September is planned to include presentations from consultants and partners, as well as financial input from the Director of Resources. The purpose of this workshop would be to consider overall priorities and themes for the new Derbyshire Dales Plan. The results of this workshop will be discussed between the Leaders and CLT on 22 September.
- 2.8 The second (different) Members Workshop on 5 October would aim to develop a steer for the Corporate Plan based on priorities emerging from the first session. It will build upon the outcome of the first Member workshop, developing projects to enact the priorities highlighted at the first workshop.
- 2.9 It is considered essential that this is Members' corporate plan. To that end in addition to the workshops it is important that the **Governance and Resources Committee** 'owns' the process and the plan, so that what is presented to **Council** is seen as a Member-led plan. It is for Members to consider the results of these reports, the outcomes of the workshops, and to come to view about what priorities should be taken forward.
- 2.10 The following chart illustrates the process and some key timescales for the preparation of the new Corporate Plan:



Other considerations

- 2.11 Agreeing and expressing priorities is only the first part of preparing a corporate plan. The more challenging task is to cut down the multitude of possible activities and projects (all of which fit within the agreed priorities) into a programme that is deliverable within available financial and staff resources.
- 2.12 The work undertaken by Circling Squares (Council, 29 September 2022) identified that the current Corporate Plan includes too many targets, projects and actions. In order better to match ambition to resources, a key requirement is to **reset expectations with regard to prioritisation and resourcing**. Circling Squares stated that:
- Identification of the priorities and the ability to resource them is essential to defining what can realistically be achieved, managing stakeholders expectations and seeking agreement of what can be either ignored or moved to a longer timescale.*
- 2.13 The difficult task facing Members will be to ensure the new Derbyshire Dales Plan is more focussed, and is developed in a way which allows staffing and financial resources to be taken into account. Such an approach allows for the development of more realistic and deliverable actions.
- 2.14 Therefore as more definitive actions, targets and projects start to take shape, these will need to be tested to ensure that there are adequate resources, both human and financial to ensure that they are capable of implementation at the required time. Managing the number and level of targets, activities and projects to be undertaken at any one time, to enable the Derbyshire Dales Plan to be deliverable for given resource levels, is considered to be a key role of the Governance and Resources Committee.

2B PROGRESSIVE ALLIANCE PRIORITIES

2.15 The Progressive Alliance has stated “**We have a clear goal: Thriving communities in a thriving environment.**” It has since refined this into three proposed policy objectives:

- *Building flourishing and sustainable communities through housing policies, economic development plans, and Council service provision.*
- *Protecting and enhancing the Derbyshire Dales environment through the local development plan and the infrastructure plan, and working with partner-organisations to minimise pollution and improve biodiversity.*
- *Creating a more caring and responsive District, looking after vulnerable groups for which the Council has responsibility and in the manner that the Council interacts with the Derbyshire Dales community.*

2.16 It is understood that a more detailed Progressive Alliance strategy framework is being developed to expand upon these three objectives.

2C RESIDENTS SURVEY RESULTS

- 2.17 In order to inform the preparation of a new Corporate Plan a comprehensive Residents Survey was commissioned from consultants Marketing Means Ltd. This was undertaken in February and March 2023. Invitations were sent to 6,167 randomly selected households from across the whole of the Derbyshire Dales. A total of 1,977 responses were received, well in excess of the original target of 1,500. A copy of the full report is at Appendix 1, with a selection of points summarised below.

Your local area as a place to live

- 2.18 Overall satisfaction with the local area as a place to live (the sum of 'Very' and 'Fairly satisfied' responses) was 86%. This is significantly more positive than the Local Government Association's [LGA] national February 2023 result (76% satisfaction).

Your Council – Satisfaction

- 2.19 Overall satisfaction with the way Derbyshire Dales District Council runs things was 60% (similar to the LGA February 2023 result of 61%). A combined total of 76% of respondents felt very or fairly well informed by Derbyshire Dales District Council about the services and benefits it provides. The February 2023 LGA survey results showed 59% feeling well-informed, so Derbyshire Dales residents' views of the Council's information sharing are significantly more positive.
- 2.20 A slight majority of residents (53%) were satisfied with local sports & leisure facilities. Nearly three-quarters of residents (73%) were satisfied with parks, recreation grounds and open spaces. Just over half of residents (55%) were satisfied with the Council's efforts to keep areas including highways free from litter. More than two-thirds of residents (68%) were satisfied with the Council's waste & recycling collections.

Importance of services

- 2.21 Residents were asked to rate the importance of District Council services as well as how satisfied they were with them. The results suggested that providing permanent jobs and home for local people was of high importance, with 70% or more agreeing that all of the Council's business support and housing support services could play an important role, most important being **creating and sustaining local jobs and business opportunities**. When combined with views on residents' satisfaction with each service, the priorities for improvement with highest importance but lowest satisfaction proved to be improving the supply and range of affordable homes to rent and improving the supply and range of affordable homes to buy.
- 2.22 When asked for opinions on services that could help in supporting keeping the District a clean, safe, and healthy, the most important in residents' eyes were **keeping town centres, villages, and streets clean and clear of litter, dog fouling and fly tipping, and household waste and recycling collections**. When combined with views on residents' satisfaction in this

regard, the priorities for improvement with highest importance but lowest satisfaction were initiatives to deal with crime and anti-social behaviour and providing regulatory services.

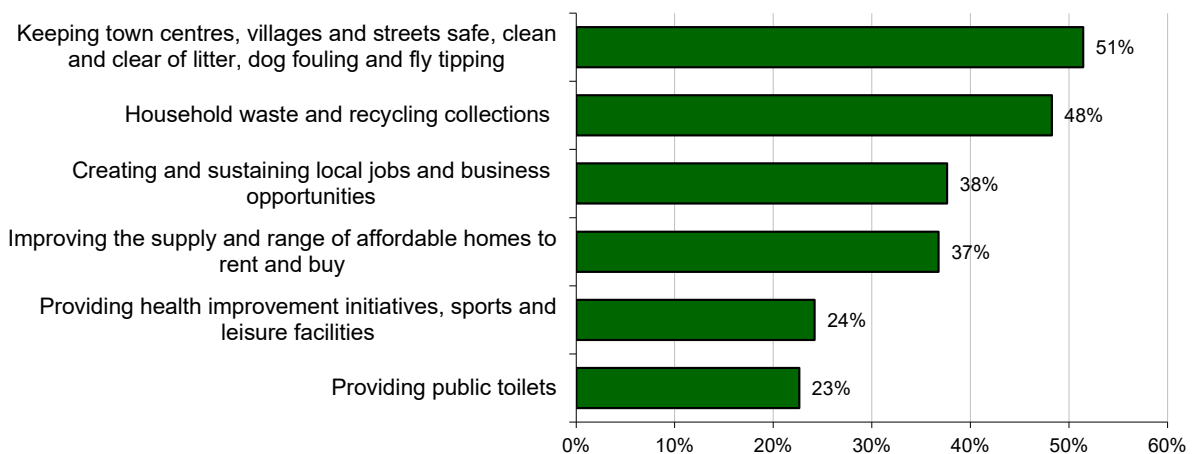
2.23 When asked for views on community services and facilities in the Derbyshire Dales, the most important services to residents were **providing public toilets, maintaining public parks, recreation grounds and cemeteries, providing sports and leisure facilities, and providing and maintaining off-street car parking**. When combined with views on residents' satisfaction in this regard, the priorities for improvement with highest importance but lowest satisfaction were providing and maintaining off-street car parking for residents and visitors, supporting community and voluntary groups, revenues and benefits service, and public toilets.

Budgets

2.24 Overall, 47% agreed that Derbyshire Dales District Council provides value for money, the same as the LGA's February 2023 result.

2.25 When asked to select three services as most important for the Council to prioritise spending on, the top three (as shown in Figure 1 below) were:

1. **Keeping town centres, villages, and streets safe, clean, and clear of litter, dog fouling and fly tipping**
2. **Household waste and recycling collections**
3. **Creating and sustaining local jobs and business opportunities**



Source: Marketing Means 2023

Base: All who gave a valid response (1,962)

Figure 1

2.26 When asked to select three services as least important for the Council to spend money on, the three were particularly likely to be selected were (as shown in Figure 2 below):

9. **Initiatives to address the impact of climate change and support biodiversity**
10. **Promoting Derbyshire Dales as a tourism destination to increase visitor spending**
11. **Improving access to council services and information**

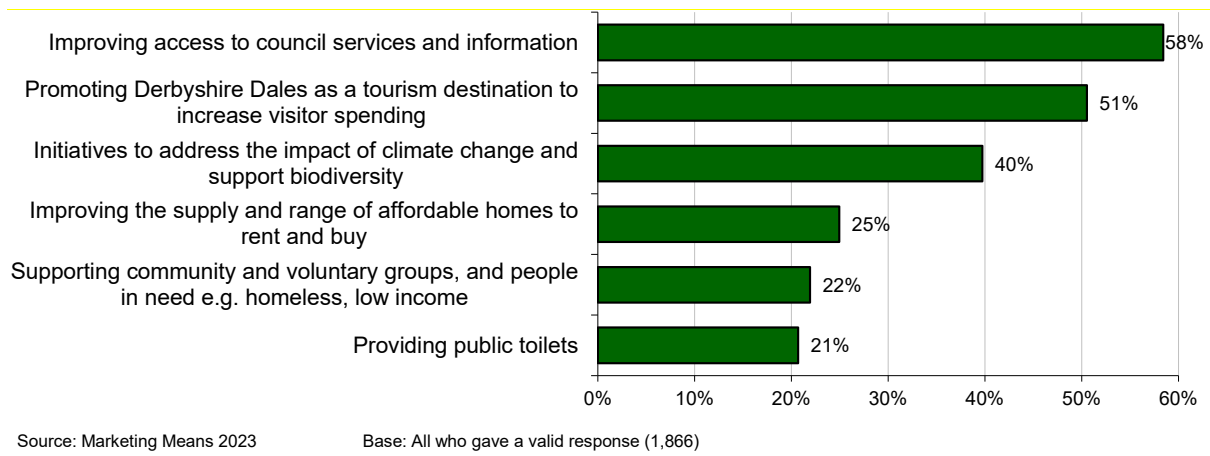


Figure 2

Have your say

2.27 When respondents were asked to provide their thoughts on the three most important issues/concerns for them locally, whether or not they are within the Council's service responsibility, the most likely topics to be mentioned related to traffic/roads and litter.

2.28 Respondents were also asked to state which three words they would use to describe what they want the Derbyshire Dales to be like in four years' time. Many different themes emerged, but the three most popular each mentioned by at least 20%, were:

- clean/tidy/litter-free/looked after
- safe/ crime-free/ secure
- 'green'/ environmentally friendly/sustainable/natural

2D EVIDENCE BASE

- 2.29 To sit alongside the Residents Survey, KADA Research Limited were commissioned to prepare an evidence base of key social, economic and environmental data for Derbyshire Dales. A copy of this report is set out in Appendix 2. The purpose is to demonstrate, factually, what are the key issues facing the Derbyshire Dales, and as importantly what are not key issues for the district. A selection of points is summarised below.
- 2.30 A significant piece of evidence is that alongside a slight decline of overall population numbers in the Derbyshire Dales in recent years, the population is ageing. Indeed, the Census 2021 shows the **average (median) age of Derbyshire Dales residents is 51 years old**. There are only three districts in England and Wales that have a higher average (median) age: East Lindsey (e.g. Skegness) at 52; Rother (e.g. Bexhill-on-Sea) at 53; and North Norfolk (e.g. Cromer) at 54. The average (median) age for England is 40 years.
- 2.31 More than 53% of the Derbyshire Dales population is aged 50 years or over. This in contrast to England as a whole, where only 38% are aged 50 or over. The Census also shows that the Derbyshire Dales is the joint least densely populated local authority area across the East Midlands. Access to green space is high and air pollution levels are, in general, low.
- 2.32 With regard to community, the KADA evidence base indicates poor broadband access within otherwise thriving places. High levels of physical activity correlate with high life expectancy. However, the combination of distance, transport links and low population density in rural areas can lead to challenges in accessing and providing services.
- 2.33 Crime rates are the lowest of any local authority in Derbyshire and experienced the smallest increase of virtually all comparator areas. Business survival rates are higher than the English average, although new start-ups have dropped by 4% recently and there has been a decline in high growth enterprises.
- 2.34 Areas of concern flagged in the KADA evidence base include the Derbyshire Dales having low economic productivity. This impacts upon wages which at £461 are the **second lowest weekly wages** in Derbyshire (Chesterfield is very slightly lower at £460), sitting well below the county average (£485) and significantly below England average (£536).
- 2.35 Derbyshire Dales has the **most expensive median house prices** in Derbyshire which, coupled with low wages, means that house prices are between 10 and 13 times that of annual earnings.
- 2.36 The district has a high proportion of non-decent properties, particularly those built pre-1918. Such older properties are more costly to heat. As such the authority has a marginally higher proportion of **fuel-poor households** than the English figure and this number is rising, in contrast to a national reduction in fuel-poor homes.

- 2.37 Derbyshire Dales is the fourth highest comparator local authority for both total and per capita **CO2 emissions** despite reductions of 11.2% and 12.4% respectively from 2015-2019. Of the area's total emissions transport is the biggest contributor (45% of all emissions) and has increased by 1.2% despite a national reduction in transport emissions of 1.0%.
- 2.38 In summary, the KADA evidence base indicates that green space, physical activity and low crime are all themes on which the Derbyshire Dales already excels. However, significantly low local wages and high local house prices are contributing to a declining and ageing population; and together with CO2 emissions and insulation these are concerns.

2E RESIDENTS AND STAFF WORKSHOPS

Staff Workshops

- 2.39 Two workshops were held with District Council employees in June and July 2023. At these staff were presented with the results of the residents survey, and the evidence base. They were asked for views on policies and projects for the next four years, and to consider budgets and resources.
- 2.40 Staff felt that the District Council should continue to: support the delivery of affordable housing; address climate change (including the provision of more EV charging points); support for local businesses and support the local economy.
- 2.41 Staff were also asked for their views on what Derbyshire Dales should look like in four years time. The responses suggested that staff wished to see thriving and effective communities, a clean green and safe place for people to live, an inclusive and sustainable place to live.

Residents Workshops

- 2.42 Two residents workshops were held: in Matlock and Ashbourne, both in July 2023. These were attended by 20 residents, who had participated in the Council's online panel, and three Councillors. These took the same format as those held for staff, with the exception that these sought to elicit more detailed views from residents about key services areas and to explore some survey findings in more depth.
- 2.43 The results of both residents workshops suggest continuation of: support for the delivery of affordable housing for local people (with more focus on the development of zero/low carbon homes), and support for local businesses, especially those delivering high quality jobs (with more focus on green jobs) and for town centres.
- 2.44 There was a wish to support more litter picking. Keeping the parks and open spaces clean and tidy was seen as important. Provision of public toilets was important to those present, and two attendees raised the costs of town centre car parking in Ashbourne. It was suggested that there could be more projects related to climate change and biodiversity, but that there still needs to be an emphasis on recycling and an effective waste/bin collection service.
- 2.45 A budget simulation exercise was the final part of the workshops. Participants were asked to consider how the District Council's revenue budget should/could be aligned with emerging themes and priorities when compared to the existing budgetary provision.
- 2.46 The budget results across all four workshops suggested that there should be **additional investment in support of the local economy, housing, and measures relating to climate change**; to be achieved through some limited budget redistribution away from central services and financial management.

3 Options Considered and Recommended Proposal

- 3.1 The recommended next step is to explore options further. This is via
- (a) Member Workshop to consider overall priorities and themes for the Derbyshire Dales Plan (19 Sept). At this workshop, Marketing Means will present the residents survey results, Kada will present the evidence base, the Director of Resources will present the financial position and conduct a budgeting exercise, and the Chair of Peak District Partnership will offer a partnership view
 - (b) Second Member Workshop to consider specific projects and activities, along with programming/resourcing, to enact the priorities highlighted at the first workshop (5 October)
 - (c) Further report to the Governance and Resources Committee to consider and approve specific projects and activities including programming/resourcing (2 November)
 - (d) Council meeting to adopt the new Derbyshire Dales Plan (23 November)
- 3.2 One alternative approach would be for Members to develop their corporate plan without giving due consideration to the views of residents and partners. This is not recommended. A further alternative would be for Members to develop a plan that failed to consider the statistical evidence base that describes the state of the district. This too is not recommended. Another option would be for Members' corporate plan to not give adequate consideration to the limited financial and staffing resources available at the District Council. This is not recommended.
- 3.3 What is recommended is a balanced approach whereby Members consider fully the factual evidence, residents perceptions and partner views, alongside their own priorities and with careful consideration of available staffing levels and finances. It is for Members to consider these and come to view about what should be prioritised.

4 Consultation

- 4.1 Whilst this report sets out the key issues and options for the future, ultimately it is for Members to decide the contents of the new Plan. As such it is considered essential that Members have the opportunity to consider and debate the future contents of the new Derbyshire Dales Plan.
- 4.2 Two Member workshops have been set up – the first to be held on 19 September and the second one to be held on 15 October 2023. It is intended that the first workshop will recap the evidence set out in this report and seek to develop the priorities for the Derbyshire Dales Plan. The second workshop will build upon the outcome of the first, developing projects to enact the priorities already highlighted at the first workshop.
- 4.3 Members are encouraged to attend the first workshop as a minimum, and if possible both.
- 4.4 The Derbyshire Dales Plan preparation has involved extensive consultation with residents and staff, as set out in this report. If Members were to follow

the consultation results, their overall priorities would match those of Derbyshire Dales residents.

5 Timetable for Implementation

5.1 It is envisaged that the new Derbyshire Dales Plan would be approved by Council in November 2023, form the basis of budgeting and service planning this winter, with those budgets being approved at Council in March 2024. The new Derbyshire Dales Plan would come into force from April 2024. It will replace the current Corporate Plan which runs to March 2024.

5.2 Key elements of the remaining process for developing the Plan are therefore:

Date	Activity
14 September	G&R Committee meeting to consider corporate plan development process and timescales
19 September	Member Workshop to consider overall priorities and themes
22 September	Leaders / CLT meeting
5 October	Members Workshop to consider specific projects and activities, along with programming/resourcing
2 November	G&R Committee meeting to consider new corporate plan projects and activities including programming/resourcing
23 November	Council meeting to consider adoption of the new corporate plan
7 March 2024	Council meeting to set budget and SMART targets for 2024/25

6 Policy Implications

6.1 The new Derbyshire Dales Plan will set the overall direction for the delivery of Council services and policies. This may result in different service areas adopting new and revised policies, depending upon the extent of changes envisaged in the Plan.

7 Financial and Resource Implications

7.1 The development of a new Derbyshire Dales Plan will require an appropriate level of budgetary provision to deliver the projects and proposals included therein. This may necessitate some prioritisation and redeployment of existing budgets and staff.

7.2 In this regard, the crucial task for Members will be to select from the multitude of possible activities and projects (all of which fit within priorities) and agree a focused programme that is deliverable within available financial and staff resources. Such an approach allows for the development of a realistic and deliverable plan. As stated previously, managing the number and level of targets, activities and projects to be undertaken at any one time is a key role of the Governance and Resources Committee.

7.3 The financial risk of this report's recommendations is assessed as low.

8 Legal Advice and Implications

- 8.1 This report refers to the Derbyshire Dales Plan which as stated is the District Council's primary policy document and a statutory requirement under the Local Government Act 2000. The legal risk associated with taking the decisions as recommended has been assessed as low.

9 Equalities Implications

- 9.1 As the Derbyshire Dales Plan will impact all Council services, an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) will be carried out to ensure the Council meets its statutory duties on equalities. The EIA will also highlight and, if needed, suggest mitigation for potential positive and/or negative implications.

10 Climate Change and Biodiversity Implications

- 10.1 To be considered as themes and activities emerge.

11 Risk Management

- 11.1 To be considered as themes and activities emerge.

Report Authorisation

Approvals obtained from Statutory Officers:-

	Named Officer	Date
Director of Community & Environmental Services, in absence of the Chief Executive	Ashley Watts	06/09/2023
Director of Resources/ S.151 Officer (or Financial Services Manager)	Karen Henriksen	25/08/2023
Monitoring Officer (or Legal Services Manager)	James McLaughlin	05/09/2023