

REPORT TO FULL COUNCIL

STRATEGIC PLAN STATUS REPORT JANUARY 2025



Report Reference C-24-25
Meeting Date 13th January 2025
Agenda Item 11
Prepared by Town Clerk

1.0 BACKGROUND

The council adopted its strategic plan in July 2023. The strategic plan sets out the council's six strategic aims and a series of objectives which will deliver them. Annually, committees agree a series of specific actions to pursue the delivery of objectives, this is done as part/in tandem with setting draft budgets. In accordance with the strategic plan, the combined action plan is presented to Full Council at its January meeting, ahead of setting the budget.

It is noted that the corporate peer challenge has recommended the council reviews the priorities and effective duration of the strategic plan. The corporate peer challenge working group will be considering how to progress this recommendation with a view to revisions being made to the strategic plan later this year.

This report provides an overview of:

- a) Action delivered to date to deliver the council's strategic objectives
- b) The agreed actions for the 2025/26 civic year

2.0 DELIVERED ACTIONS

2.1 OVERVIEW

The table below details the number of actions in the yearly action plans, the number of actions carried forward from the previous year and the percentage completed at the end of the year / to date.

Year	Agreed Actions	Carried Forward Actions	% completed
2023/24	100	n/a	58
2024/25	63	37	19
2025/26	42	47	n/a

Based on the current outstanding actions for the 2024/25 year, it is anticipated 42% of actions will have been completed by the end of the year. 47 actions which are unlikely to be completed by the end of the year are intended to be rolled over into the next year action plan, the remainder have been superseded.

As noted in the corporate peer review report, the council's ambition has not been matched with capacity. This is being addressed through the proposed staffing changes.

2.2 WORK TO DELIVER OBJECTIVES

Appendix 1 details the completed actions the council has taken to pursue each strategic objective. This includes the actions from the 2023/24 and 2024/25 years to date, and other ad hoc activity which has arisen. There are six objectives under which the council has not yet completed/programmed activity.

3.0 2025/26 ACTION PLAN

Noting that this is subject to change following any revision of the strategic plan or priorities following the corporate peer review, the current agreed action plan for the 2025/26 year is detailed below.

Action ID	Objective Ref	Action
COM01	C1	Implement specific actions from the [to be developed] St John's Wood ward action plan
COM02	C6	Deliver a successful fifth ReFresh Knutsford community freshers fair
COM03	C6	Agree actions to address issues arising from the [to be conducted] community group survey
COM04	C8	Issue monthly new and community group e-newsletters
COM05	C8	Develop the e-newsletter database to reach 2,500 resident subscribers [carried forward]
COM06	C8	Subject to the outcome of the trials, host regular Mayor in the Market engagement opportunities
COM07	C8	Trial councillor "ward walks"
COM08	S3	Undertake further engagement with young people to develop a Knutsford Youth Strategy
ASS01	C3	Implement Town Ranger apprenticeship
ASS02	S5	Develop a five-year management strategy for all built assets
EVE01	H2	Develop the programme of activity for Heritage Open Days 2025
EVE02	TC6	Host the Knutsford Music Festival
EVE03	TC6	Host a <i>Paint Knutsford</i> event
EVE04	TC6	Host Knutsford Christmas Market and Lights Switch On
EVE05	TC6	Host a Rural Touring Arts event
EVE06	C5	Host the Knutsford Pumpkin Path, Bunny Hop and Crib Service
EVE07	C5	Host the Young Artist of the Year Competition
EVE08	C5	Host an outdoor cinema event
EVE09	C5	Host Picnic in the Park
ENV01	H1	Develop a five year "Knutsford Heritage Plan"
ENV02	H2	Deliver a project under the Knutsford Heritage Plan
ENV03	H2	Install the next Lost Streets plaque
ENV04	H3	Publish a further Conservation Area guidance leaflet
ENV05	C4	Host three volunteer days/sessions to engage volunteers in town maintenance projects
ENV06	T1	Develop an implementation plan for identified improvements
ENV07	T3	Develop a series of recommended walks to promote use of public rights of way
ENV08	T4	Secure agreement from Crown Estate to create permissive path from Tabley Road to Tabley Park
ENV09	T4	Explore the feasibility of creating other identified permissive paths

ENV10	E1	Implement specific actions as identified in the green space strategy
ENV11	E2	Establish a Knutsford Climate Action working group and develop an action plan
ENV12	E3	Deliver the 2025/26 Nature Action Plan activity plan
TOW1	TC1	Complete specific project plan aims (once agreed) to further the TCMP.
TOW2	TC6	Deliver a successful Knutsford at Home event
TOW3	TC6	Deliver a successful Knutsford Flash Fashion event
TOW4	TC3	Deliver a successful programme of alfresco dining events
TOW5	TC6	Deliver successful Knutsford Family Fest
TOW6	TC6	Deliver successful Wellness Week
TOW7	TC3	Develop initiatives which support local shopping
TOW8	TC4	Deliver specific actions under the Tourism Strategy
TOW9	TC5	Deliver a programme of business skill workshops
PLA01	C10	Engage in the Cheshire East Council Local Plan review process
PLA02	H3	Develop a reference guide for the Planning Committee for key aspects of the appraisals for use when reviewing planning applications

Additionally, the following actions from the current year action plan are set to be carried forward.

Action ID	Objective Ref	Action
COM2	C1	Develop a forward plan with stakeholders to further understand issues in relation to access to services in St John's Wood ward and how they will be addressed.
COM22	C1	Commence implementation of the forward plan to address service access in St John's Wood Ward.
COM12	C8	Develop a schedule of existing locations where posters/notices can be displayed to promote activity
COM15	C8	Develop a 'consultation and engagement template' for use when planning engagement activity, detailing opportunities for connecting with existing networks and events, developing novel engagement methods and how to reach different stakeholders and demographics.
COM23	C2	Subject to the outcome of the consultation on renaming Longridge: further develop proposals with the community.
COM24	C2	Council Anniversary '50 things to do' to encourage all residents to explore more of the town
COM3	C2	Undertake a consultation with the residents of Longridge on whether the streets should be renamed and ideas for renaming.
ENV10	C4	Explore the creation of a volunteer team to support activity
ENV35	C4	Host three volunteer days/sessions to engage volunteers in town maintenance projects
ASS14	C5	Develop a funding plan for a phased refurbishment of the Council Offices
COM25	C6	Undertake a community group survey to understand areas where groups need support
COM26	C6	Utilise e-newsletter to support community group communications
COM4	C6	Develop an updated community organisation directory both for internal use and published on the Town Council website.

COM28	C7	Develop a 'setting up a new group' section of the council website to provide guidance on setting up new organisations
COM8	C7	Undertake a gap analysis of the community organisations within the town to identify if there are any areas where new organisations would be beneficial
COM29	C8	Issue 12 monthly news and community group e-newsletters
COM30	C8	Trial a public version of the Week in Brief bulletin
CPM32	C8	Undertake a critical review of the effectiveness of council public consultations in December 2024
PLA09	C9	Explore creation of a checklist for members to appraise applications against
ENV29	E4	Review of the mature trees survey to identify 10 trees/areas suitable for preservation orders and an application to be submitted to Cheshire East Council
PLA10	E4	Undertake a review of planning decisions for tree applications over the past twelve months to identify learning points from CEC Tree Officer reports
PLA15	E4	Lobby Cheshire East Council for increased protection of trees under the planning system
ENV06	H3	Develop an action plan for addressing the actions raised in the management plans of each conservation areas
ENV32	H3	Publish Legh Road Conservation Area guidance leaflet
ENV33	H3	Commence implementation of CA management plans
ENV34	H3	Subject to adoption of remaining CAAMPs, develop information leaflets for each area
PLA12	H3	Implement a system to ensure the conservation area management plan objectives are considered when reviewing planning applications within said areas.
PLA13	H3	Secure the adoption of the submitted CAAMPs for Heathfield Square, Cross Town, St John's and Town Centre
COM17	S3	Compile a schedule of existing services and facilities within Knutsford to create a baseline
COM36	S4	Develop an action plan to address shortfall in services
ASS04	S5	Develop a phased programme for renovation of the Council Offices
ASS06	S5	Terms to be agreed with Bruntwood for their occupation of 60 King Street
ENV12	T1	Develop an Active Travel Infrastructure Plan
ENV36	T1	Consult on the draft Active Travel Infrastructure Plan
ENV37	T2	Develop a funding plan for the delivery of the Parkgate Cycle Path
ENV38	T3	Develop a rights of way improvement plan for existing routes
ENV39	T4	Identify desirable permissive path routes
ENV22	T6	Research the options and costs of enhanced bus services
ENV24	T7	Review existing speed limits in Knutsford and put forward proposals for change under the CEC Speed Management Strategy
ENV40	T7	Seek the implementation of top two speed limit changes as identified
TOW27	TC3	Implement the Knutsford Feeding Charter
TOW11	TC4	Implement the coach friendly town initiative
TOW30	TC5	Develop a Tourism Strategy and arising action plan

TOW33	TC5	Deliver a programme of business skill workshops
TOW31	TC6	Support partner tourism destinations with tourism strategy
TOW34	TC6	Investigate shared utility contract options
TOW35	TC5	Provide recruitment strategy support to local businesses

4.0 DECISIONS REQUIRED

Council should note the current progress in delivering the strategic plan.

It can provide feedback to committees about their actions for the upcoming year, for example to indicate priority/lower priority actions.

Council should note that there will be a review of the plan delivered as part of the recommendations arising from the corporate peer review. This will likely involve an informal meeting for members to determine the priority areas.

APPENDIX 1 ACTIONS COMPLETED BY OBJECTIVE

Objective	Action Completed
TC1 Develop and implement a Town Centre Masterplan incorporating the objectives of the Town Centre Vitality Plan	The council has established a working group to develop the masterplan and this has met a few times. The SPF funded work provided some pointers on the next stages.
TC2 Work with Cheshire East Council to implement the From Top to Bottom Street proposals on traffic movement and parking	Using SPF funding, feasibility assessments were undertaken on a number of the proposals in the report. The aspects which can be taken forward will be considered in the development of a masterplan.
TC3 Deliver a programme of initiatives to increase footfall into the town centre	The ‘Take a Seat’ and Alfresco Dining initiatives have been delivered. Promotion of the Knutsford Voucher and Taste Knutsford has continued. Developed the Discover Knutsford branding and website to promote the town to visitors.
TC4 Develop and implement a Tourism Strategy to increase the number of visitors to Knutsford	External consultancy to deliver this was funded through the SPF. A working group will be reviewing the output to agree an action plan.
TC5 Work with local businesses to ensure they have the skills and resources needed to thrive	A programme of workshops was delivered in 2023/24.
TC6 Deliver an annual programme of events designed to promote footfall to the town centre	A number of events have been delivered as part of this, including Knutsford at Home, Family Fest, Flash Fashion and the Christmas events.
T1 Develop and implement a Knutsford Active Travel Infrastructure Plan	A working group has been set up.
T2 Work with partners to deliver a cycle path linking The Moor and Parkgate Lane	SPF funded was secured to develop an outline design. The budget for 2025/26 includes funds to deliver the next design stage.
T3 Promote awareness and use of Public Rights of Way	Volunteers are currently surveying the network to identify improvements.
T4 Work with landowners to introduce additional permissive paths connecting the wider walking and cycling networks	
T5 Lobby for improvements to rail services and work with partners to improve Knutsford Railway Station	The council responded to the consultation on ticket office closures in 2023, no specific support has been requested from the community rail partnership.
T6 Lobby for improvements to bus services and improvements to	A survey of bus infrastructure has been commenced.

Objective	Action Completed
Knutsford Bus Station	
T7 Work with Cheshire East Council and Cheshire Police to reduce speeding	
E1 Work with partners to develop a Green Spaces strategy for Knutsford	A survey was undertaken in summer 2024 and is currently being analysed.
E2 Develop and support the implementation of a Knutsford Community Climate Emergency Action Plan	
E3 Continue to work with partners to deliver improvements to the town's biodiversity	A new four year Nature Action Plan was agreed and is being progressed by the working group.
E4 Work to protect the Town's trees	A TPO was secured for one tree threatened with felling.
C1 Work with partners to identify needs and improve access to services to support those in need within the St John's Wood ward.	Meetings have been held with partner organisations (CEC, Great Places and The Welcome)
C2 Bridge the apparent disconnect between Longridge and the rest of Knutsford	Picnic in the Park held in September 2024.
C3 Expand the Town Ranger service to increase the cleanliness, maintenance and attractiveness of the town	Town Ranger Apprenticeship agreed and currently being recruited to (closes 28/02).
C4 Develop volunteer involvement to enhance the cleanliness, maintenance and attractiveness of the town	A Tidy Town Taskforce has been taking place in the warmer months, focused on businesses tackling weeding in the town centre.
C5 Deliver an annual programme of events designed to bring the community together	Programme has included events such as Pumpkin Path, Crib Service, Bunny Hop and Picnic in the Park. More planned in 2025.
C6 Support and develop community organisations operating in Knutsford ensuring they have the skills and resources needed to thrive	Commenced producing an e-newsletter, held annual ReFresh community fair.
C7 Support the creation of new community organisations where needs are identified	Supported the creation of the <i>Knutsford Community Garden</i> group.
C8 Improve town communication channels to help connect the	Introduced improved e-newsletter platform. Work ongoing to build e-newsletter database.

Objective	Action Completed
community	
C9 Monitor the use of the Knutsford Neighbourhood Plan and undertake a formal review of policies	Timing of a review of the plan has been agreed and a reserve being established to fund it.
C10 Engage in all consultations on local planning policy	The council has responded to the CEC Local Plan consultation submitting a detailed response. Likewise detailed responses were submitted to the NPPF consultation and a recent consultation on changes to planning authority decision making.
C11 Engage with developers to ensure that any development which takes place delivers the maximum community benefit	Informal meetings held with Crown Estate regarding its Manchester Road allocation and with other smaller developers to be briefed on proposals.
H1 Develop a Knutsford Heritage Plan	
H2 Work with partners on events and initiatives which celebrate and promote the town's heritage	Two blue plaques installed in 2023/24 (Marjorie Hurst and Prison Governor's House); supported the production of an interpretation board at the Centennial Place memorial garden; delivered a Heritage Open Days programme in 2024; held an exhibition on the council's history for its 50 th anniversary; agreed a "lost streets" signage project.
H3 Work with partners to implement the management plans and protect the town's Conservation Areas	Legh Road Conservation Area appraisal now adopted. Appraisals for remaining areas submitted to CEC (except Town Centre, awaiting final amends from consultant).
H4 Support the protection and retention of the town's built heritage	
S1 Work with the Knutsford Medical Partnership to see the delivery of improved primary medical care facilities	A number of stakeholder group meetings have been held. Awaiting decisions from ICB on the project moving forward.
S2 Work with partners to develop and implement a preventative health strategy	
S3 Increase provision of services, facilities and employment for young people across the town	A survey of young people was completed in partnership with Great Places and CEC. A working group is being created to lead the development of a youth strategy.
S4 Understand the service needs of the community and lobby for their retention and increased provision as	Engaged with CEC on Leisure Centre and Library. Agreed to explore volunteer scheme to keep library open longer. Undertook research on school places

Objective**Action Completed**

necessary	planning to understand there is capacity.
S5 Ensure the Council's built assets are financially sustainable with the usage and community benefit maximised	Agreed a refurbishment for the Market Hall.