FGP26.020 Adoption of Strategic Plan 2026-2030 and Action Planning Framework
Author: Parish Clerk
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1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of this report is to:

- Seek support for the adoption of the Laverstock & Ford Parish Council Strategic Plan 2026-2030.
- Support for the framework for the review, refinement and development of the associated Action Plan so that detailed actions, resource requirements and budget proposals can be prepared in time for the 2027/28 budget-setting process.

2. BACKGROUND

Over recent months the Clerk has developed a revised Strategic Plan covering the period 2026-2030. The Plan establishes:

- A Vision, Mission and Values statement;
- Six strategic pillars (carried over from the earlier plan);
- A series of strategic objectives under each pillar;
- A framework for performance management, monitoring and review;
- Links between strategic priorities, financial planning and organisational capacity.

The Strategic Plan has been developed to provide a clear long-term direction for the Council whilst remaining flexible enough to respond to changing circumstances.

An associated Action Plan has also been drafted. However, further work is required to ensure that actions:

- Properly support the adopted strategic objectives;
- Are realistic and deliverable;
- Contain meaningful performance measures;
- Have identified funding sources; and
- Can inform future budget decisions.

The plan and draft actions were circulated to Councillors earlier this year and comments considered for this current version.

3. TIMELY ADOPTION

The Council's annual budget setting process is fast approaching. So, delaying adoption of the Strategic Plan until a comprehensive programme of detailed action planning has been completed would significantly reduce the ability of committees, working groups and officers to prepare robust proposals for inclusion within the 2027/28 budget.

It is therefore proposed that the Strategic Plan itself be adopted now, whilst allowing detailed consultation, action development and budget planning to continue during the implementation phase. This approach establishes strategic direction whilst retaining flexibility to refine actions over time.

4. CONSULTATION

It is recognised that several councillors have emphasised the importance of resident and stakeholder engagement. The draft plan was published on our own site for consultation during the month of July. It was also publicised across Facebook in various community groups / pages. Responses totalled 4 residents.

To balance further meaningful engagement with the need for timely implementation, it is proposed that relevant committees and working groups undertake more targeted engagement when reviewing actions within their assigned strategic pillars. Specific engagement exercises may be undertaken where appropriate, including with under-represented groups such as young people.

This approach allows consultation to inform the detailed actions that residents are most likely to see and experience in practice, whilst avoiding unnecessary delay to the adoption of the Strategic Plan itself.

5. ACTION PLANNING FRAMEWORK

Given the scale of the Strategic Plan and the breadth of Council responsibilities, it would not be practical for a single committee, working group or officer to undertake a comprehensive review of all actions. It is therefore proposed that responsibility be distributed across the Council's committee and working group structure.

The purpose of these reviews will be to:

- Refine existing actions;
- Identify additional actions where required;
- Consider delivery arrangements;
- Identify costs and funding requirements;
- Recommend use of existing budgets, reserves, Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), Section 106 funding or future precept funding where appropriate;
- Submit recommendations for consideration during budget setting.

6. PROPOSED RESPONSIBILITY ALLOCATION OF PILLARS

a. Community Resilience

Lead Body: Communications & Community Engagement Working Group

Supporting Officers: Communications & Community Engagement Officer, Deputy Clerk

The group will review actions relating to communications, community engagement, youth provision, volunteering, grants, community safety and commissioned community services.

b. Planning & Development
Lead Body: Full Council
Supporting Officer: Clerk, Deputy Clerk
Given the strategic and politically sensitive nature of planning matters, responsibility should remain with Full Council. The Clerk can add this as an agenda item from October 2026 onwards and will liaise with councillors in the interim periods to further progress it.

c. Sustainable Transport
Lead Body: Operations Working Group
Supporting Officers: Operations Officer, Deputy Clerk
The group will review actions relating to highways, Speed Indicator Devices, rights of way, active travel and traffic management.

c. Climate Change & Biodiversity
Lead Body: Operations Working Group
Supporting Officers: Operations Officer, Clerk
The group will review actions relating to biodiversity, tree management, habitats, climate adaptation and environmental improvement projects.

d. Play Areas, Open Spaces & Community Facilities
Lead Body: Play Area Strategy Working Group (new)
Reporting To: Operations Working Group
Supporting Officers: Clerk, Operations Officer and Responsible Financial Officer
The venues reorganisation project is proceeding. However, given the scale and complexity of the Council's play area portfolio, it is recommended that a dedicated working group be established to undertake detailed play area strategy development in this area. The group would consider:

- Play area quality and accessibility;
- Future investment priorities;
- Asset replacement planning;
- Play area (possibly open space) enhancement;
- Future capital funding requirements.

The Clerk suggests that councillors not part of the Ops WG should be members of this. Recommendations would be reported through the Operations Working Group.

e. Accountability
Lead Bodies: Finance & General Purposes Committee and Personnel Committee
Supporting Officers: Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer

The Finance & General Purposes Committee would focus on:

- Financial sustainability;
- Reserves;
- Asset replacement forecasting;
- Budget planning;
- Financial reporting.

The Personnel Committee would focus on:

- Councillor recruitment and retention;
- Officer development;
- Succession planning;
- Workforce resilience.

7. FUTURE GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS

Given that the Ops WG has multiple strategic pillars, members may wish to review governance arrangements further once the first phase of action planning has been completed. However, it is considered preferable at this stage to focus on producing deliverable actions and robust budget proposals rather than establishing multiple additional working groups. Future governance changes can be considered if workload or project complexity justifies them.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

No direct financial implications arise from adoption of the Strategic Plan. The proposed action planning process will identify:

- Existing budget allocations;
- Potential use of reserves;
- Potential use of CIL and Section 106 funds;
- New precept-funded budget requirements.

These recommendations will be brought forward separately through the Council's normal budget-setting process.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

Council is requested to RESOLVE to:

a) Adopt the Laverstock & Ford Parish Council Strategic Plan 2026-2030.
b) Approve the proposed framework for review and development of the Action Plan.
c) Allocate responsibility for action planning and review in accordance with Section 6 of this report.
d) Establish a Play Area Strategy Working Group reporting to the Operations Working Group.
e) Request that all relevant committees, working groups and officers submit proposed actions, resource requirements and budget recommendations in time to inform the Council's 2027/28 budget-setting process.