

Summary

Our vision: Putting Our Communities First

Our priority: to make Chesterfield a thriving borough. To deliver this, we will focus on four objectives:

1. To make sure that local people benefit from growth in Chesterfield Borough
2. To continue delivering regeneration projects that will make Chesterfield Borough a better place
3. To develop our great town centre
4. To improve access to technology that meets the needs of our residents, businesses and visitors

Our priority: to improve the quality of life for local people. To deliver this, we will focus on four objectives:

5. To increase the supply and quality of housing in Chesterfield Borough to meet current and future needs
6. To increase the quality of public space for which the council has responsibility through targeted improvement programmes
7. To improve the health and well-being of people in Chesterfield Borough
8. To reduce inequality and support the more vulnerable members of our communities

Our priority: to provide value for money services. To deliver this, we will focus on becoming financially self-sufficient by 2020, so that we can continue to deliver the services our communities need.

Our values:

- Customer focused
- Can do
- One council, one team
- Honesty and respect

1. Introduction

This plan describes the priorities for Chesterfield Borough Council over the next four years. We have chosen a four year period as it gives us time to properly plan ahead, without trying to speculate about what our communities will need and expect in the distant future. It does not cover in detail everything that we do as a council (this will be covered by our service plans on an annual basis). Instead it features the activities where we will be focusing our efforts and where we want to see a real shift over those four years.

In putting the plan together, we have been guided by our simple vision:

Putting Our Communities First

As a council, we are here to serve and support our communities. Those communities include our residents and tenants, our businesses, our visitors, our students and our voluntary groups. It is these communities that make Chesterfield Borough a great place to live, work and visit. And it is these communities that we seek to put first as a council in all that we do.

This vision shows through in the recent work we have done on behalf of our communities, from transforming the historic Market Hall to securing four prestigious Green Flag awards for our parks, from attracting nationally recognised productions to our cultural venues to investing £52 million to achieve the Decent Homes Standard for all council homes. Our commitment to this vision has led to rising levels of resident and tenant satisfaction with our services. It is evident in the many ways in which we regularly engage with our communities about those services.

The plan should be read alongside other key plans for the borough, in particular our Local Plan: Core Strategy (2011-2031) which sets out proposals for the development and use of land in Chesterfield Borough.

2. Context

Our achievements

There is a great deal to be proud of as we look back on the work delivered by the council and its partners in the last few years. We have taken important steps to secure **the future of Chesterfield Borough**, getting the green light from the Planning Inspectorate for our Local Plan: Core Strategy which sets out how land across the borough will be used over the next 20 years. This includes a number of major regeneration schemes, such as Chesterfield Waterside and Peak Resort. We have played an active role in partnership working with other councils in order to bring additional benefits to Chesterfield Borough, for example securing the devolution of powers and funding from Whitehall as a member of the Sheffield City Region Combined Authority.

The council has continued to provide services that **improve the environment we live in**. Four of our parks (Queen's Park, Holmebrook Valley Park, Poolsbrook Country Park and the Crematorium Grounds) have been awarded the prestigious Green Flag Award. Standards of cleanliness have improved across the borough and many of our parks have benefitted from refurbishment and improved play facilities, including a £1.3m project at Eastwood Park. Our historic Market Hall received a £4m redevelopment and a conservation area has been established for Chatsworth Road.

By embracing growth and attracting investment to Chesterfield Borough, we have been **improving the economy and employment prospects** for our communities. £2.2m of Regional Growth Fund money has been awarded to local businesses and £100m of support provided to attract new businesses to the Markham Vale Enterprise Zone. The Destination Chesterfield partnership has put the town on the map and its 160 business champions promote Chesterfield Borough as a great place to do business.

The council has taken further steps to **provide great leisure and cultural facilities**. The new £11.25m Queen's Park Sports Centre will provide high quality accessible facilities, as well as a base for Chesterfield College students. We have invested in the Pomegranate Theatre and the Winding Wheel, upgrading our cultural venues to bring larger and more varied shows to Chesterfield and attracting £495,000 in Arts Council England funding. We have seen our visitor numbers increase, with over three million a year now bringing £140 million into our economy each year.

As the landlord for almost 9,500 homes, we pride ourselves on **providing a responsive housing service**. We made a £52m investment in our housing stock to bring all our council homes up to the Decent Homes Standard. Our £3m Parkside Housing Scheme will provide high quality homes for older people and new affordable housing has recently been completed at Chesterfield Waterside. The council has also invested in the Local Authority Mortgage Scheme to help local people make their first step on the property ladder.

The council has delivered these achievements and rising satisfaction levels despite a reduction to the funding it receives from central government. We have therefore worked hard to **become more efficient**, investing in a programme of transformation that is improving how we use our offices and depots, how our staff deliver our services and how our customers are able to access our services.

Chesterfield Borough in 2015

Every year we publish a 'State of the Borough' report, which includes a wide range of facts and figures about the borough that we use to help shape the services we provide. The latest report shows that the population of the borough has increased by 5,000 in the ten years between 2001-2011, with 3,400 more households forming in the same period. The proportion of those households that are privately renting has doubled in this time, from 6.2% to 12.4%, reflecting a national shift away from owner occupation. Our population has become more diverse and there are over 900 households with no residents for whom English is their main language.

Our State of the Borough report shows that there remain some particular **challenges** for the council and the communities it serves. The levels of skills and qualifications of our residents remain below the county and national averages. Whilst unemployment has fallen, it remains above the national average and there remain particular issues for younger people and those who are long-term unemployed. There are significant variations in the health of those in the borough, with life expectancy in the most deprived areas 10 years lower for men and 7.6 years lower for women when compared with the least deprived areas. Almost a fifth of our year 6 children are classed as obese and alcohol related hospital admissions, smoking related deaths and adult obesity remain key concerns. The borough contains a number of areas that rank among the 10% most deprived in the country and about 3,900 children live in poverty.

Looking to the future

In planning for the next four years, the council is preparing for changes that will affect us and many other councils across the country. We know that the amount of funding we receive from central government will continue to reduce, falling to almost nothing by the end of the period covered by the plan. Therefore we will need to continue to find savings, as well as looking at other ways to bring in income to fund the services we provide. We will need to work even more closely with partners, building on sharing services and joining up with others to have a greater presence and take on more powers that currently sit in Whitehall.

We know that reforms underway to the welfare system will have an impact on our communities and that we will need to continue to respond through our housing and support services. We know that the population will continue to change, with an increasing proportion of older people with different expectations and service needs. We know that as technology develops, many of our residents, visitors and businesses will expect to engage with our services in different ways and will look for improved access to technology in our towns, villages and business centres.

Our plan sets out how we will be responding to these challenges and we know that doing so will also require some changes to how we work and development in the skills of our staff. Thankfully we already have a highly skilled and committed workforce and a strong record of developing our teams to ensure they provide the quality services our communities expect and deserve.

3. Our priorities: to make Chesterfield a thriving borough

Chesterfield Borough is already successful in attracting businesses and visitors, bringing income and jobs that benefit our communities. The council has played a lead role in driving growth and regeneration, working closely with the business community and partners in other public sector organisations. We have a diverse and appealing offer for those living and working here and this continues to support a strong visitor economy. However, in an increasingly competitive country and in a global economy, it is vital that Chesterfield Borough continues to thrive. We also need to keep pace with the demands and expectations of those that live, work and visit our Borough and take a long-term view of what needs to be in place to sustain growth in the future.

To deliver this priority, we have set out four key objectives where the council will focus its efforts over the next few years:

1. To make sure that local people benefit from growth in Chesterfield Borough

As we continue to attract businesses and visitors to Chesterfield Borough, it is important that local people are able to benefit from the growth. We will support new and existing businesses, and work with our partners to make sure that local people have the right skills to take the job and training opportunities that are created. As well as supporting our existing businesses to grow, we want to continue attracting new investors and encouraging new businesses to start up.

In the first year of the plan, we will:

- launch, with Chesterfield College and other partners, our plans for Chesterfield to be an Apprentice Town
- develop a local employment and skills plan to maximise job opportunities at the new Peak Resort
- bring dedicated business support advisers into Chesterfield Borough as part of the Sheffield City Region and D2N2 Growth Hubs

Over the next four years, we aim to:

- agree local labour clauses in 100% of new eligible major developments and fill at least half of the jobs locally where those clauses are in place
- reduce the number of young people not in education, employment or training by 75%
- increase year on year the number of businesses in Chesterfield Borough

2. To continue delivering regeneration projects that will make Chesterfield Borough a better place

The council has been leading work across Chesterfield Borough to bring forward sites to create more jobs, housing and growth in the area. We will continue to drive this activity, maintaining momentum on sites where work is underway and building a pipeline of activity for the future.

In the first year of the plan we will:

- put in place the canal infrastructure at Chesterfield Waterside to unlock further development
- develop a funded delivery plan for the regeneration of the Staveley and Rother Valley Corridor
- select a new development partner for the Northern Gateway project

Over the next four years, we aim to:

- create 7,500 sq metres of commercial floorspace and 300 homes at Chesterfield Waterside
- start on site with the regeneration of the Staveley and Rother Valley Corridor and ensure that local benefits are maximised as plans develop for the proposed HS2 maintenance depot
- increase the occupancy at the Markham Vale Enterprise Zone

3. To develop our great town centre

A vibrant town centre is important for the whole of the Chesterfield area, as it will drive and support our plans for growth. It brings economic benefits and rightly remains a source of pride for our residents. Recent years have shown how challenging it can be to maintain a busy and thriving town centre and it is important we continue to shift and adapt our offer, whilst preserving what is best from our proud history and tradition.

In the first year of the plan we will:

- in consultation develop a delivery plan for an upgrade to the outdoor Market
- adopt the revised masterplan for the town centre, setting the scene for future development
- enable a varied programme of events and festivals throughout the year, including negotiation of a new commercial five year deal with Derbyshire County Cricket Club to secure the future of the annual Chesterfield Festival of Cricket

Over the next four years, we aim to:

- extend the town centre offer for our residents and visitors and increase satisfaction levels with the council's cultural venues
- sustain town centre occupancy levels at 90% or higher and increase occupancy levels at the outdoor market, reaching 90% by the end of the period
- increase the value of the visitor economy by at least 5%, bringing in an additional £7m per annum
- begin work on a mixed employment, leisure and residential scheme in the northern part of the town centre, complementing an appropriate re-use of the former Co-op building

4. To improve access to technology that meets the needs of our residents, businesses and visitors

Our expectations regarding technology have shifted massively over the last ten years. If we wish to continue attracting businesses to locate here and people to visit, it is important that our business parks and our town and district shopping centres reflect these shifting expectations. By increasing our investment in technology, we will also make sure that our residents have greater opportunities to access modern and responsive council services, and our staff are suitably equipped to provide this.

In the first year of the plan we will:

- deliver the very latest digital connectivity to tenants at our innovation centres and provide wi-fi access in council buildings
- switch to a new website that will provide our customers with improved access to our services, including from mobile devices
- develop a digital inclusion strategy, to increase skills, access and connectivity among our communities

Over the next four years, we aim to:

- significantly enhance broadband access at key locations, including business centres and new housing schemes
- create a digital hub in Chesterfield, including a wi-fi network across the town centre
- increase user satisfaction with on-line council services year on year
- make all appropriate council services available on-line

4. Our priorities: to improve the quality of life for local people

Satisfaction with services provided by the council is rising and many of our residents enjoy a good quality of life. We continue to provide a clean, safe and green environment and increase the range of leisure services available. More housing is being built to meet the needs of our communities and as the landlord for over a fifth of the homes in Chesterfield Borough; we have recently ensured all of those houses are of a decent standard. However, we know that our communities still look to the council to bring further improvements and to provide for people and places that do not currently enjoy the standards they need and expect.

To deliver this priority, we have set out four key objectives where the council will focus its efforts over the next few years:

5. To increase the supply and quality of housing in Chesterfield Borough to meet current and future needs

We know that access to decent housing is vital for the quality of life and well-being of communities. We will continue to work to support our existing residents and plan for future growth by providing the right housing offer across Chesterfield Borough. This needs to be housing that meets the changing pattern of the lives and aspirations of our residents, housing that is affordable and housing that will attract people coming into the new jobs created in the area.

In the first year of the plan we will:

- complete and fully occupy the new supported housing scheme at Parkside
- invest £32m in our council housing to maintain and improve quality for our tenants
- agree a strategic approach which will allow the council to build its own housing for sale and rent

Over the next four years, we aim to:

- increase overall housing supply, bringing 1520 new homes into Chesterfield Borough, of which up to 30% on appropriate sites will be affordable
- begin directly building new housing by making use of surplus council land
- maintain the quality of homes across all tenures and maximise further investment in home energy improvements to deliver affordable warmth for our residents
- Improve the quality and management of privately owned properties through investigation, assistance and active regulation where necessary

6. To increase the quality of public space for which the council has responsibility through targeted improvement programmes

The council is able to make a significant difference to the quality of people's lives through the way it maintains and improves the estates, buildings and open spaces it owns and manages. Working with communities, it will continue to deliver a rolling programme of improvements that make places across the borough cleaner, safer and greener. We will do this by investing our own resources and attracting additional funding, as well as looking for alternative uses and/or owners for those assets and spaces that are no longer serving communities well.

In the first year of the plan we will:

- open the new £350,000 sports pavilion at Eastwood Park
- begin estate regeneration work at Barrow Hill
- improve the play area at Circular Road Park and improve park facilities at Stand Road Park
- in consultation develop a masterplan for King George V park

Over the next four years, we aim to:

- deliver estate regeneration programmes at Barrow Hill and Holmehall and begin work on a third programme following consultation with tenants
- improve resident satisfaction with our parks and open spaces
- increase tenant satisfaction with their neighbourhood as a place to live to 85% or above
- increase the number of Green Flag awards for our parks to 6
- invest in improvements at a further 5 parks and children's play areas in a rolling programme, funded by releasing assets that no longer serve communities well

7. To improve the health and well-being of people in Chesterfield Borough

The life expectancy of Chesterfield Borough residents varies significantly between areas, being 10 years lower for men and almost 8 years lower for women in the most deprived areas compared to the least deprived. We will continue to work with our partners to improve all aspects of health, especially those such as obesity, alcohol abuse and self-harm, where our residents are currently less healthy than the national average. We know that a whole range of factors have an impact on people's health and the objectives we have set to bring additional jobs and better housing will lead to health improvements. As a council, we can also focus on increasing participation in leisure activities through the services we provide and working closely with partners who provide a wider range of services to tackle some of the underlying reasons for poor health.

In the first year of the plan we will:

- open the new £11.25m Queen's Park Sports Centre
- provide a new Green Gym at Langer Lane Recreation Ground
- become an official member of the Healthy Communities Network and work in partnership to improve the health and wellbeing of our communities
- promote the 'Time to Change' mental health campaign within the council and among our partners

Over the next four years, we aim to:

- increase participation in sport and physical activity at facilities provided by the council and promote healthy lifestyles via the Active Derbyshire partnership
- increase the use of our parks and open spaces by delivering a varied programme of events and increasing participation in voluntary activities by 5% each year
- work with our partners to reduce the gap in health outcomes between the most and least deprived parts of the borough, as measured through the annual health profile
- build capacity in our communities to allow groups to take on the management of facilities currently run by the council
- work with partners to develop and expand the support given to tenants and residents to enable them to live independently

8. To reduce inequality and support the more vulnerable members of our communities

We will build on the support that we have already provided to those members of our communities most in need and work with our partners to make sure our collective resources are used effectively to support vulnerable people across Chesterfield Borough. We will particularly address social exclusion through improving access to financial support, making sure our residents know where to go for additional help and bringing agencies together to target help where it can have most impact.

In the first year of the plan we will:

- work with our partners to deliver an intensive support and advice package in Holmehall, Grangewood, St. Helens and Middlecroft
- introduce an assessment of an applicant's ability to manage and maintain a tenancy before allocating council housing and provide support to those not yet able to sustain a tenancy
- provide increased support for homeless people through additional housing advice workers and a dedicated 'No Second Night Out' worker
- set an example as a council by paying all our staff a living wage

Over the next four years, we aim to:

- maintain our commitment to working in partnership with community and voluntary groups in order to increase awareness, satisfaction and take-up of programmes offering financial advice and support to individuals and families
- develop a more targeted approach to the funding used by the council and its partners so that the most vulnerable people in our communities receive effective, joined-up support
- provide and expand our homelessness support and prevention services in partnership with Bolsover and North East Derbyshire councils

5. Our priorities: to provide value for money services

The council has a strong record in delivering good value for money services. In recent years it has been able to find the savings necessary to balance its budget, whilst still providing a wide range of services with which our communities are increasingly satisfied. It has improved the efficiency of running services and continues to operate to high standards of governance and accountability. It looks to make effective use of the assets that it owns and to develop opportunities for bringing in income in order to fund the services our communities need. However, the financial challenges are growing and we see more and more councils looking to transform into very different types of organisation. Chesterfield Borough Council also needs to change and has been looking at new approaches in response to these financial challenges.

Our focus in delivering this priority will be **to become financially self-sufficient by 2020**. This means that we will need to fill the gap that is left as central government funding (currently around £4.4m per year) reduces to almost zero by the end of this plan period. It is only by prioritising ‘balancing the books’ that we will be able to continue to serve our communities and deliver the services they need and expect from us.

To do this, we will continue to look at how we provide services more efficiently and make savings. We will develop those areas where we could generate more income from our services and assets. And we will need to consider whether the council should continue to provide all of the services it does at present, or whether some might be better provided in partnership with others. Doing these things will mean changing the nature of the council and how it works. Continuing to operate as we do now will not be sufficient given the scale of the financial challenges that face us. It will mean that we need to build on the existing skills of our staff and take some considered risks.

In the first year of the plan we will:

- freeze council tax for 2015-16
- consult on options for the use of the existing Queen’s Park Sport Centre site
- review and strengthen our Great Place: Great Service programme and deliver £586,000 of savings in order to balance our budget
- roll out on-line bookings for our cultural and leisure facilities
- maintain our Investors In People status and use our assessment to inform the development of a new workforce strategy
- develop a new operating model for the council in order that we are prepared to meet future challenges

Over the next four years, we aim to:

- ensure the council has a balanced budget each year, making up the reduction in central government grant through savings and increased income
- develop a five year plan for the use our surplus land assets, investing in opportunities that will bring sustained revenue to the council to use for delivering services
- take a more commercial approach where appropriate, including developing new services and selling existing services to new customers
- improve the technology that supports our service delivery and increase the skills and capacity of our staff to work in a more commercial manner
- increase the % of citizens who feel we provide value for money services

6. How we will work

The council has four values that describe how we want to work to achieve our vision.

We are **customer focused**: delivering great customer service, meeting customer needs. We regularly carry out satisfaction surveys to find out what our communities and residents think of the services we provide. We engage with our residents, tenants, visitors and businesses through a wide range of groups, forums and on-line, seeking their views on our services and how we can improve them. We look to deal promptly and effectively with complaints and always welcome comments and compliments.

We take a **can do** approach: striving to make a difference by adopting a positive attitude. Our staff come up with and deliver solutions to problems and regularly go the extra mile to ensure our communities are well served. We take a 'public sector first' approach to service delivery, believing in the benefits to our communities that come from a public service ethos. We contribute actively to partnerships with other organisations within Chesterfield Borough and beyond our boundaries. We manage our suppliers and contractors fairly but robustly to make sure we are getting the best from the public money we spend.

We act as **one council, one team**: proud of what we do, working together for the greater good. The council has recently restructured, moving away from rigid departments to encourage teams to work more closely together. We value regular and open engagement with all staff and carry out regular surveys to find out how we can improve as an employer. We invest in the development of our staff, regularly attracting additional funding for training. We promote a commercial outlook within our teams, to make sure we secure value for money and look for opportunities to generate additional income that we can then invest in service delivery.

We believe in **honesty and respect**: embracing diversity and treating everyone fairly. The council has a strong record of going well beyond its statutory equality duties and regularly works with partners to host and promote events throughout the borough that celebrate diversity. Our staff and elected members work well together and individuals are able to express their views openly within their teams and at wider meetings and events.

Our annual employee survey provides a valuable source of feedback on how well we are doing in light of these values. We are committed to taking action in response to the survey each year, working with our staff to improve satisfaction scores and increase employee engagement.

Get in touch

Whether you are a member of staff, a resident, work in a local business or for one of our partner organisations, we welcome your views about this plan. You may want to contribute to its delivery, find out more about what we do or suggest activities that you feel are missing.

If so, please contact us at:

Visit us in person

Customer Service Centre
85 New Square
Chesterfield S40 1SN

Opening hours

8.30am to 5pm on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday
10am to 5pm on Wednesday
8.30am to 4.30pm on Friday
9am to midday on Saturdays for payments only

Call us

You can telephone us on 01246 345 345 or you can text 07960 910 264.

Website and Social Media

Website – www.chesterfield.gov.uk

Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/ChesterfieldBoroughCouncil>

Twitter - <https://twitter.com/chesterfieldbc>

YouTube - http://www.youtube.com/user/chesterfielduk?feature=results_main

You can also find out more and get involved in the work of the council by attending one of our Community Assemblies. There are four groups that cover the borough (north/south/east/west) and each one meets four times a year. As well as helping us by giving your views on key issues, each Assembly has a small budget that can be used for community based projects.

Please go to <http://www.chesterfield.gov.uk/Community-assemblies-1162.html> or call 01246 345344 to find out more about the Community Assemblies.