

Huntingdonshire District Council- Productivity plan 2024/25

Purpose of this document

This document is a response to the request from The Local Government Minister Simon Hoare, to set out what you have done in recent years, alongside your current plans, to transform your organisation and services. To lay out how we will monitor and assess these plans to assure yourselves and your residents that they will be delivered. Finally, to consider the work your council undertakes alongside other public services, such as the NHS and police.

A number of these matters are laid out in more detail in the attached Continuous Improvement Plan and will be subject to further work as we design a Transformation Strategy over the next 12 months.

Huntingdonshire District Council has fundamentally refreshed many of key internal governance frameworks over recent years. These approaches have built on the established work on unit costs and benchmarking to target activity on boosting productivity. Building on an established budget setting focus on statutory duty, and value for money, and enhanced this with:

1. A refreshed Corporate Plan with a limited set of key objectives
2. A refresh of the entire performance framework of the Council
3. A refreshed project planning and service planning framework.
4. A refreshed approach to risk and governance.

1) How have you transformed the way you design and deliver services to make better use of resources?

Number	What we are doing	How we demonstrate this
1.1	Continual focus on value for money, unit costs, and benchmarking to drive continuous improvement. Performance indicators are subject to monthly SLT review, and quarterly public scrutiny. This work will be expanded in 2024/25.	Quarterly performance reporting. Independent benchmarking of costs versus comparator authorities. Metric/KPI – Unit cost reporting and performance reporting
1.2	One Leisure Operating Model review – our leisure centre services support resident outcomes and contribute to holistic support as part of the wider health framework. We needed however to move a self-financing longer term sustainable model. Capital investment programmes are currently being developed for the budget process.	An independent review of our long-term delivery model, alongside a review of staffing structure and costs, and promotion of the service, all endorsed by Members. See the report to committee here . All subject to ongoing financial and performance review. Metric/KPI – Service usage figures and net financial position.
1.3	Customer Transformation and Strategy (Complex Customer Change)	A programme has been scoped and resourced to review and improve the strategic approach to managing and addressing customer contact, and ensuring contact is systematically addressed in the correct location at the minimum possible cost. Project mandate details are here . This will be monitored as part of our standard public quarterly performance reporting. Metric/KPI – financial impact, channel shift and customer satisfaction

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1.4	Garden Waste Subscription service – in 2024/25 the Council introduced a subscription fee for residents that wished to use its garden waste service.	A core aspect of ensuring we focus on statutory duties but provide a genuine choice to residents. The introduction of a digital by design service to enable residents to sign up digitally. The rationale for the subscription service is detailed in this report . The supporting financials for the decision can be found here . Metric/KPI – budget, number of subscribers, subscription growth rate and renewal rate, customer satisfaction and complaint resolution
1.5	Planning service review – capacity has been invested to support the review and improvement of efficiency in the planning service, with a focus on efficiency and unlocking growth. Building on our position as the 2 nd highest performing planning authority in Cambridgeshire.	A targeted review of the planning service, which will be supported by external challenge by the LGA, which will be published. All metrics remain a core part of public performance reporting, including the public reporting of backlog cases, ahead of direction to do so. Metric/KPI – unit costs, planning performance stats,, and the overall impact on growth and development within the area.
1.6	New Ideas process established – Enabling services to immediately action improvement opportunities supported by a rolling transformation fund overseen by councils S151 officer. A budget reserve established to invest in activity to deliver ongoing revenue general fund benefits.	How it works and what we have achieved is demonstrated here . In the 2024/25 budget £1.0m was earmarked reserve to invest in projects which would facilitate future revenue budget savings or income growth to develop the Council’s financial sustainability. Link to the Councils Medium Term Financial Strategy here . Metric/KPI – return on investment, project delivery of approved ideas, ongoing revenue benefits
1.7	Workforce strategy – a comprehension review of the Council’s ability to attract, develop, and retain a talented workforce who truly connect with, and deliver, its priorities and values.	A programme which will ensure we have a workforce with the capability and capacity to deliver the objectives of the council. Workforce Strategy report . Metric/KPI – time to fill vacancies, quality of hires, employee turnover rate, recruitment and retention rates

2) Opportunities to take advantage of advances in technology and make better use of data to inform decision making and service design.

Number	What we are doing	How we demonstrate this
2.1	We operate a 3 Council ICT shared service, which has seen us improve delivery and reduce costs.	Independent review of our architecture estate. 15% financial efficiencies on pre-shared service position realised. We are currently undertaking an independent review of our shared service to identify further opportunities for improvement. Metric/KPI – operational efficiency, cost savings, service quality and user satisfaction.
2.2	Use of AI/Automation to deliver transformation/link to OFLOG report.	We are making use of Co-pilot AI licenses in the authority and have a resourced project to roll-out AI capability to release organisational resources. Metric/KPI – process efficiency performance, task automation rate, cost saving and return on investment
2.3	Using technology and software to reduce data duplication and rework. This is happening across the organisation.	Specific examples include - Implementation of recruitment processing linked to our HR system, removing the need for manual forms and data re-keying. Upgrade of the online learning and training portal, reducing the need for “in person” training sessions, removing the need to maintain manual records. Metric/KPI – increase in data maturity, data duplication reduction, processes automated, percentage of data entries requiring correction

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2.4	Corporate plan 2023 – 2028 Contextual Outcome Measures	In addition to standardised Power BI driven performance reporting, We have developed an outcome focussed power BI report to show how Huntingdonshire is performing against a range of contextual outcome measures which allows the Council to measure and monitor how outcomes are changing. Supporting co-tasking with partners, and data informed decision making. Metric/KPI – improvement in outcomes, no. of cross sector projects.
2.5	Productivity data, performance dashboard & benchmarking	Quarterly performance information reported to committee. 2023/24 report can be viewed here . Metric/KPI – performance metrics, increase in quartile perf.
2.6	Data sharing with partners	OPCC has funded shared work on a data portal project between HDC and Cambridgeshire Police. Metric/KPI – number of data driven initiatives launched, number of active data sharing agreements, track data sharing security incidents
2.7	LGA Data Maturity Assessment Tool	Assessment completed, and shared. A detailed action plan is underway to support AI and RPA opportunities. Metric/KPI – Data maturity increase.

3) Ways to reduce wasteful spend within systems, including specific consideration of expenditure on consultants and interim staff, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion programmes – this does not include programmes designed to promote integration and civic pride, and counter extremism.

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3.1	Approval process for, and monitoring the ongoing use of, consultants.	The engagement of new consultants requires the prior approval of the Senior Leadership team, having considered the justification and affordability of these resources. A report on consultants currently in the organisation, including narrative, presented to SLT monthly for challenge. Metric/KPI – Spend actual v budgeted cost, alignment with strategic objectives, cost efficiency, compliance and quality delivery of services/project
3.2	Establishment controls	Establishment is reviewed as part of the annual MTFS process; vacant positions are removed. Recruitment for positions which are not part of the budget need SLT approval. Metric/KPI – Establishment control, budget variance.
3.3	Energy utilisation	Close monitoring of energy use across the Council’s facilities and prompt investigation of any variations in trends. Investment in energy efficiency technology e.g., replacement lower powered lighting and building management systems. Metric/KPI – Energy spend.
3.4	Procurement spend controls	The Council has a Code of Procurement which is part of the Constitution and must be followed. Refreshing social value policy. Metric/KPI – cost reduction, price variance, procurement cost and user satisfaction
3.5	Budget management and review	All budget managers have online access to their budgets on financial system, the Council’s financial accounting system and are required to review their actual income and expenditure against budget monthly, permitting prompt identification and investigation of unexpected variances. Actual and forecast figures are reported to committees every quarter with narrative to explain any significant variations. Income and expenditure are both reported, rather than simply net expenditure. The Council has a Code of Finance

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		which details the income and expenditure review measures deployed and the assurance processes in place to capture these. Metric/KPI – forecasting accuracy, return on investment, spend v budget
3.6	Medium Term Financial Strategy	The Council produces a five-year financial strategy, allowing it to manage its finances with a longer-term perspective. Adjustments to revenue budget and service levels can be made in advance of financial pressures, which are more likely to be sustainable in the long term rather than reactionary expenditure cuts. An example of this is the introduction of the Garden Waste subscription service which was successfully introduced to cover forecast deficits in the MTFS. Metric/KPI – revenue growth, profitability, return on investment, project completion rate, benchmarking to industry standards
3.7	Staff Performance and Disciplinary Policy	The Council has a Code of Conduct which all staff are expected to follow, as well as uphold its icare (Inspiring, Collaborative, Accountable, Respectful, Enterprising) values. Staff who do not follow the Code of Conduct or demonstrate behaviours in line with the icare values will be taken through the disciplinary process and their behaviours investigated. This fair and open process removes the need to incur costs relating to discredited staff. Metric/KPI – disciplinary action rate, time to resolve and employee turnover rate, performance reviews

4) Barriers preventing activity that Government can help to reduce or remove

Number	Barrier	Impact/HDC Mitigation
4.1	Single year Local Government funding settlements preventing strategic thinking.	The risks around short-term funding decisions are built into the Council's risk register with mitigations based around forecasting and taking proactive action. This can incur additional costs as we plan for changes that do not occur. Metric/KPI – track project completion rate, staff turnover rate, number of midyear budget revisions
4.2	Forward visibility on funding opportunities for the next twelve months.	Greater and earlier visibility of funding opportunities allows for more effective planning and creates wider opportunities to work with partners, and potentially achieve better outcomes. Maintaining a local dialogue with partners can identify a wish list of needs that could be addressed through short notice funding. Metric/KPI – number of funding applications submitted, strategic initiatives launched, track time to develop funding proposals, number of projects completed on time and within budget
4.3	Capital needs to be matched with Revenue.	Ensure capital investment funding is wherever possible supported by revenue budget to support the ongoing use/maintenance of the asset. Metric/KPI – amount of capital spending relative to revenue
4.4	Clarity regarding future aspirations for Planning – and effective Local Planning	Clear visibility and involvement in development of development framework and clarity on intent, to prevent abortive work.