



CABINET

21st June 2024

Thursday, 27th June, 2024, 6.00 pm in Town Hall, Market Street, Tamworth

SUPPLEMENT – ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS

Further to the Agenda and Papers for the above meeting, previously circulated, please find attached the following further information, which was not available when the agenda was issued:

Agenda No. Item

7. **Sustainability Strategy and Productivity Plan (Pages 3 - 22)**
(Report of the Leader of the Council)

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. C. V.'.

Chief Executive

To Councillors: C Dean, D Foster, N Arkney, B Clarke, S Daniels and L Smith.

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Thursday, 27 June 2024

Report of the Leader of the Council**Financial Stability Plan and Productivity Plan****Exempt Information**

None.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide Cabinet with information and a timetable for the Financial Stability Plan and Productivity Plan. This report has been considered by Corporate Scrutiny on 25th June 2024.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Cabinet approve:

1. The approach and timetable detailed in the Financial Stability Plan.
2. The budget and medium-term financial planning process.
3. The Productivity Plan prior to submission and full publication to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC).
4. The delegation for finalisation and sign off of the Productivity Plan to the Leader and Chief Executive.

Executive Summary

The Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy report considered by Council on 27 February approved a 2024/25 budget which required the use of £1.1m of general fund reserves to balance the budget. By 2027/28 the budget deficit is expected to increase to £4.8m, at which point there will be insufficient general fund reserves to enable a balanced budget to be set. The budget report recommended that a sustainability strategy should be developed in order to avoid significant financial cuts in future years. This Strategy will form part of a larger organisational improvement plan for the Council and will be called the **Financial Stability Plan**. This Plan forms the basis of the budget process for 2025/26 and further supports the planning process for medium term budget setting process also included within this report.

The Council is required as part of the 2024/25 Local Government Finance Settlement to produce a **Productivity Plan**. All local authorities have to prepare and publish this Plan by 19 July 2024. This Plan provides a summary of Council activities to improve and monitor productivity as well as any barriers from Central Government that could be removed to improve the Council's efficiency and effectiveness. This Plan (attached at Appendix 1) fulfils the DLUHC requirements. Further this Plan details how the Council will transform services to make better use of resources, identify ways to reduce wasteful spending within systems and provides opportunities as to how the Council can take advantage of technological advances.

Financial Stability Plan

The General Fund budget position approved by Cabinet on 27 February 2024 is summarised in Table 1.

Table 1 – Five year Budget Forecast (assuming Yearly 2.95% Increases in Council Tax)

	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Net Cost of Services	8,183	11,605	12,795	13,144	13,605
Financing:					
RSG	(322)	(328)	(335)	(342)	(349)
Collection Fund (Surplus) / deficit Council Tax	(27)	(27)	(27)	(27)	(27)
Collection Fund (Surplus) / deficit Business Rates	1,152	-	-	-	-
Business Rates Tariff	11,173	12,361	13,139	13,401	13,669
Business Rates net income	(14,265)	(15,407)	(15,715)	(16,030)	(16,350)
Council Tax	(4,759)	(4,941)	(5,130)	(5,326)	(5,528)
Gross Financing	(7,048)	(8,343)	(8,069)	(8,323)	(8,585)
(Surplus) / Deficit	1,135	3,262	4,726	4,822	5,020
Balances Remaining (-) / Overdrawn	(9,185)	(5,923)	(1,197)	3,625	8,645

The starting budget position for the 2025/26 budget is a deficit of £3.262m. This increases to over £5m by 2028/29, by which time there would be insufficient General Fund Balances to cover the deficit. Clearly this is unsustainable and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy approved by Council in February recognised the need for a Sustainability Strategy to be developed in order to make savings in a timely manner to avoid significant financial cuts in future years. This will be called the Financial Stability Plan.

There remains a significant amount of uncertainty around Local Government funding in the medium term. This will be impacted by the outcome of the General Election. The manifestos of the major parties would indicate that there will be little additional funding for local government.

There will be an opportunity for an incoming government to provide a multi-year funding settlement which would provide certainty moving forward. However, this remains unlikely for the first year of a new Government given the limited time for long term planning before the local government funding settlement is published.

There remains ongoing uncertainty around the fair funding review and business rates reset which it makes it difficult to plan in the longer term. There is also speculation around a revaluation of properties for Council Tax.

The figures in Table 1 indicate that General Fund balances would be insufficient to fund the deficit position from 2027/28. It is therefore the objective of the Financial Stability Plan to reduce the requirement for the use of General Fund Balances in a measured way between 2025/26 and 2027/28 to enable the budget to be brought back into balance without the use of reserves by this point.

The key areas, timings and target savings are identified below:

Budget Manager Review

Timing - July to September 24

Target Savings £500k in 2025/26

As part of the budget process, Budget Managers will be requested to identify 5% to 10% savings within their budget for consideration at by the Executive Leadership Team (ELT). This will include looking at areas of persistent underspends and opportunities for making additional income

A review of HRA recharges will also commence in 2024/25.

Zero Based Budgeting – 2 budget areas per year.

Timing - July to September 24

Target 10% of budget

Identification of 2 budget areas per year to be identified by ELT as the most likely areas for potential savings.

Spend to Save

Timing - 2026/27 – 2027/28.

Target savings £500k

Opportunities for spend to save projects will be identified through the budget process. The Transformation Reserve contains in the region of £1m that could be utilised to fund spend to save projects. It is likely that this will be predominantly ICT based.

Opportunities for Service Transformation 2026/27 / 2027/28 – Target £1m in each of 2026/27 and 2027/28.

With a new administration in place, the forthcoming peer review and new Corporate Plan, the Council has an opportunity for major organisational change. This will include:

- Review of services statutory/non statutory whilst maintaining focus on our customers
- Making non statutory services as self-sufficient as possible
- Identifying opportunities for service transformation through peer challenge
- Identifying opportunities for more commercialisation
- Exploration of alternative delivery models
- Making better use of digitalisation to streamline services and free up resources to invest in front facing office customer service.

Future year savings targets will need to be kept under review as more detailed information comes out relating to future funding plans for local government.

Timetable

Significant milestones in the budget process are subject to review but currently planned as:

- a) Budget Consultation Members Seminar – by 30th September.
- b) Emerging Policy Changes / Capital Programme bids Members Seminar by 31st October.
- c) Consultation process - results to Cabinet by 21st November.
- d) Base budget and technical adjustments to Cabinet 21st November.
- e) Cabinet to consider Council Taxbase calculation on 12th December and Business Rates Forecast on 23rd January 2025.
- f) Cabinet proposals to a Leaders Budget Workshop 20th November.
- g) Provisional RSG settlement assessment to Corporate Management Team and EMT in December.
- h) Joint Scrutiny Committee (Budget) to be held on 28th January 2025
- i) Final Budget and Medium Term Plan reports to Cabinet 13th February 2025.
- j) Budgets set at Council 25th February 2025.

A more detailed budget timetable will be presented to Cabinet in August.

Productivity Plan

On 24 January 2024, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) published details of additional funding which councils could expect in the final Local Government Finance Settlement. As part of this announcement, the Government asked all local authorities to publish a productivity plan before summer recess setting out how they will 'improve service performance and reduce wasteful expenditure'.

The council received a letter from the Minister for Local Government dated 16 April 2024 (Appendix 1), setting out the beginning of that process and a deadline for a plan to be submitted, albeit without any guidance over what the plan should look like or how it should be structured, by 19 July 2024. The letter considers the following four key questions:

- 1 How you have transformed the way you design and deliver services to make better use of resources.
- 2 How you plan to take advantage of technology and make better use of data to improve decision making, service design and use of resources.
- 3 Your plans to reduce wasteful spend within your organisation and systems.
- 4 The barriers preventing progress that the Government can help to reduce or remove.

As a response to the letter a Productivity Plan has been drafted and is attached at Appendix 2.

Options Considered

This report contains the process for considering the 2025/26 budget. Options for spend and Council Tax options will be considered as part of the budget process.

There is no option for the Council not to produce and publish a Productivity Plan.

Resource Implications

As set out in the report.

Legal/Risk Implications Background

The Council is required to set a balanced budget each year under Section 31A of the Local Government and Finance Act 1992 which includes having regard to the level of

reserves needed for meeting estimated future expenditure when calculating the Council Tax requirement.

There is a risk that the Council will not be able to balance its budget if insufficient savings are identified as part of the financial improvement plan.

A non-publication of the documents mentioned within this report could lead to reputational damage for the Council.

Equalities Implications

The equalities impact will be considered as part of the evaluation of policy changes and the Financial Stability Plan.

Environment and Sustainability Implications (including climate change)

The environmental and sustainability implications will be considered as part of the evaluation of policy changes and the Financial Stability Plan.

Background Information

[Corporate Vision, Priorities Plan, Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024/25](#)

Report Author

Rebecca Smeathers – Executive Director Finance (S151)

List of Background Papers

MTFS report attached in Budget Information.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Letter from the Minister for Local Government

Appendix 2 – Tamworth Borough Council Productivity Plan

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Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities

Simon Hoare MP
Minister for Local Government
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

16 April 2024

Dear Chief Executive

Productivity in Local Government

As you know, the Government is reviewing productivity across all public services and local government is, of course, part of that exercise. The recent [Local Government Finance Settlement](#) announced that councils would be asked to produce productivity plans. This letter formally begins that process.

May I first thank you for your very helpful engagement with my officials. Your views and thoughts have been valuable in shaping this approach to make it as useful as possible for all of us.

Local government has already done a huge amount in recent years to improve productivity and efficiency. However, lockdown and post-lockdown has proved challenging, and you are looking for new ways to go further. These new plans will help us understand what is already working well across the whole country, what the common themes are, whether there are any gaps and what more we need to do to unlock future opportunities. We will share these important lessons across the sector.

Productivity is not one-dimensional, and I would encourage you to consider the various facets that encompass the drive for greater productivity. When developing your plans, please think broadly and include reference to not only how you run your organisation, but also how you run the public services you provide and how you provide place leadership. It is with this wide view that we can ensure we are providing value for money for residents.

I am not looking to impose excessive burdens. I am not issuing you with a formal template or a detailed list of criteria to meet. I expect your plans to be three to four pages in length, and to set out what you have done in recent years, alongside your current plans, to transform your organisation and services. I do not want to specify a list of metrics you must report, but I do want to understand how you will monitor and assess your plans to assure yourselves and your residents that they will be delivered.

The plans should consider the below themes and where appropriate, should reference the work your council undertakes alongside other public services, such as the NHS and police.

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

Questions to consider:

- how has the organisation changed in recent years to become more productive? You may wish to consider what you have done around staffing, structures, operating models etc;
- how do you measure productivity in your organisation?
- what changes have you made to improve services, and what effects have those had?
- what are your current plans for transformation over the next two years and how will you measure the effects of those changes?

- looking ahead, which service has greatest potential for savings if further productivity gains can be found? What do you estimate these savings to be?
- what role could capital spending play in transforming existing services or unlocking new opportunities? If you have already used capital spending to boost growth or improve services, we would be interested in learning more;
- what preventative approaches you have undertaken and can the value of these be quantified?
- are there wider locally-led reforms that could help deliver high quality public services and improve the sustainability and resilience of your authority?

2. How you plan to take advantage of technology and make better use of data to improve decision making, service design and use of resources.

Questions to consider:

- what are your existing plans to improve the quality of the data you collect; how do you use it and how do you make it available to residents?
- are there particular barriers from legacy systems?
- how often do you share data with other organisations, and do you find this useful?
- Are there opportunities to use new technology to improve workflows and systems, such as predictive analytics and AI?

3. Your plans to reduce wasteful spend within your organisation and systems.

I know we will share the aim to reduce waste wherever we can and, while you have all made huge strides in recent years, no organisation is ever 100% efficient. You should set out your plans to reduce wasteful or “gold-plated” spend.

Questions to consider:

- how do you approach identifying and reducing waste in the organisation? How do you monitor progress?
- where have you followed invest to save and what was the result?
- how much time and money do you spend on staff EDI training (internal and external), networks, and other programmes? How many EDI Champions do you have as an organisation? How do you log and report the time and money spent on EDI related activity? How do you assess the effectiveness of that training?
- what percentage of total staff budget is spent on a) agency and b) consultants? How do you assess value for money on agency & consultancy spend and what are your plans to reduce use / costs? How many of those consultants or agency staff have been in place for over a year?
- what governance structures do you use to ensure accountability of spend?
- do you share office functions with other councils and if so, how useful do you find this?
- if you share external training costs with neighbouring councils, how do you factor out duplications of service between your council and your upper-tier council (if you have one)?

- if you have one, what is your assessment and experience of working with an elected mayor, combined authority, or devolution deal?
- what proportion of your paybill is spent on trade union facility time?

4. The barriers preventing progress that the Government can help to reduce or remove.

There will be barriers preventing you from going as far or as fast as you would like to. I would like your plans to set those out, so that we can understand how government, or the market, can help you overcome these barriers to go even further.

Questions to consider:

- what are the barriers preventing you from improving productivity further within your organisation?
- what are the barriers preventing you from improving services further?
- are these barriers consistent across multiple services?
- what would you need to remove those barriers? What do you need from government, the market or elsewhere?

Your plans must be returned by 19 July 2024, by email to productivityplans@levellingup.gov.uk.

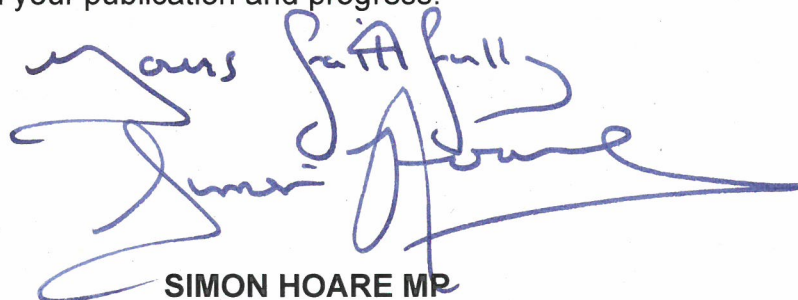
You must ensure that there is member oversight and endorsement of the plan before it is submitted, and the plan must also be uploaded to your website so that residents can see it. You should consider how you will update the plans and report on progress on a regular basis. The plans should also contain relevant metrics and key performance indicators to allow you and your residents to monitor progress.

Once received, we will review the plans to identify common themes and issues across the sector. We are keen to highlight best practice that others can learn from.

Individual plans will not be rated or scored, and we will not produce any kind of league tables. We are interested in understanding what is happening across the sector.

We are setting up a panel to consider the themes and evidence that comes from the plans. I will chair the panel and bring together experts from the sector and beyond, including Oflog and the LGA. They will consider the issues emerging from the plans, the implications for future national policy design, the role of government in supporting further change and the role of the sector in going further. The panel will advise national government and local government, and I believe this collaborative approach will ensure the most effective outcomes.

I look forward to updates on your publication and progress.



SIMON HOARE MP
Minister for Local Government

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Tamworth Borough Council Productivity Plan June 24

Introduction:

The Council is about to embark on a new journey after a new administration was elected in the May elections, the appointment of a new Chief Executive as well as a new Section 151 officer in the last 7 months. These changes together with the launch of a new Corporate Plan and the Council's participation in a Peer Review later this year will see the organisation come together in order to improve and develop the services it provides and the way it operates. Organisational activities in the coming months will see significant change, building on the achievements set out below to deliver a more ambitious and efficient Council.

Background:

When the Local Government finance settlement for 24/25 was published in late 2023, it included a requirement for local authorities to develop and share Productivity Plans on their website. These plans, which must be published by the summer Parliamentary recess, should set out how Councils will improve service performance and become more efficient.

The Government has requested that the Plans should be short and draw on work councils have already done, identifying ways to unlock productivity improvements and setting out the key implementation milestones.

Government expects the Productivity Plans to cover four main areas:

- transformation of services to make better use of resources
- opportunities to take advantage of advances in technology and make better use of data to inform decision making and service design
- ways to reduce wasteful spend within systems
- barriers preventing activity that Government can help to reduce or remove

Councillors will already be aware of the formation of the Office for Local Government in 2023 and that part of its role will be to review the performance of Local Government.

Conclusion:

The Government’s request for Productivity Plans is welcomed and this Council through its work with Elected Members, stakeholders and partners within Tamworth and its neighbouring authorities is already delivering services to those most vulnerable in our communities. However, this draft Plan will continue to develop alongside delivery of the Financial Stability Plan and Organisation Improvement Programme.

DLUHC Section	TBC Evidence / Response
<p>1. How have you transformed the way you design and deliver services to make better use of Resources?</p> <p>Questions to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How has the organisation changed in recent years to become more productive? You may wish to consider what you have done around staffing, structure, operating models etc: • How do you measure productivity in your organisation? • What changes have you made to improve services, and what effects have those had? • What are your current plans for transformation over the next two years and how will you measure the effects of those changes? • Looking ahead which service has greatest potential for savings if further productivity gains can be found? What do you estimate these savings to be? • What role could capital spending play in transforming existing services or unlocking new opportunities? If you have already used capital spending to boost growth or improve services, we would be interested in learning more: 	<p>The Recovery & Reset Programme package of savings concluded in March 23. It identified savings in the region of £5.1m over 5 years. The main achievements of the programme were:</p> <p>Customer Service – Reception Facilities at the Assembly Rooms operating with an acceleration of digital platforms allowing citizen contact and 24hr electronic access.</p> <p>Supporting Vulnerable People – The programme included an initiative around Supporting Vulnerable People - The partnership work undertaken to deliver a Council-led, partnership-owned vulnerability agenda and Third Sector Charter; informed through a baseline assessment arising from the Covid Pandemic and tailored services in the community and in people’s homes.</p> <p>TBC takes advantages of close links with the voluntary sector to help provide vital services to the community. Working with a wide range of partners that make up the Heart of Tamworth partnership which supports rough sleeping arrangements for vulnerable people. This contributed to a zero count of rough sleepers to be submitted to the government for the first time in 2024.</p>

- What preventative approaches you have undertaken and can the value of these be quantified?
- Are there wider locally led reforms that could help deliver high quality public services and improve the sustainability and resilience of your authority?

In April 2024 a Home Hub has been opened by the Community Together CIC together with HomeStart and Citizens Advice Mid Mercia which offers support in various areas of life, such as skills development, financial advice, addiction and recovery, family support, mental health and lots more.

Disabled Facilities Grants – the Council have taken the poor performing DFG service back in house. Investment made in the necessary human resources to deliver this service has enabled redesign of the process to make it more efficient and cost effective.

Continued to deliver a front of house service making use of an alternative Council asset (Tamworth Assembly Rooms).

Workforce – hybrid homeworking together with a set of modern terms and conditions has been introduced which both improves work / life balance for staff whilst ensuring continued responsiveness and accountability to our citizens. New ways of working has supported retention and attracting talent from a much wider pool. This has enabled a large proportion of the Council's office space at Marmion House to be decommissioned. The future of Marmion House is still under review and may lead to future relocation of services with a view to changing the use or disposing of the site.

Working closely with our Trade Unions we continue to benefit from exceptionally supporting cohesive working relationships. Making use of shared knowledge from other sectors and building on established trust and openness to work for the benefit of all.

Service Re-design – transformation across key services such as Treasury Management, Revenues and Benefits shared head of service and transition from Community Wardens to a Neighbourhood Impact service.

Review of carparking income - £157k additional income has been received from a review of car parking charges.

Financial Stability Plan – the Council launched a Financial Stability Plan as part of a larger organisational improvement plan in June 24. This will include the following work streams

- Review of services statutory / non statutory
- Making non statutory services self sufficient
- Identifying opportunities for service transformation through peer challenge
- Identifying opportunities for more commercialisation / delivery arms / partnership working
- Making better use of digitalisation to streamline services and free up resources to invest in front facing office customer service.

The Council has a number of joint/shared services including: Joint Waste Management Services, Health and Safety, Internal audit - all of which are shared with Lichfield District Council which provides the benefit of economies of scale and makes use of key skilled resources.

Legal Services – this service (hosted by South Staffs DC) is shared with 3 x authorities (Lichfield, Tamworth and South Staffs) and continues to provide and advice on governance and legal matters.

Peer Review – the Council is embarking on a Peer Review in October 2024. It is hoped that this will help identify and support areas of improvement.

An Organisational Development Plan will be developed which will set out our commitment and longer-term vision.

2. How you plan to take advantage of technology and make better use of data to improve decision making, service design and use of resources?

Questions to consider

- What are your existing plans to improve the quality of the data you collect; how do you use it and how do you make it available to residents?
- Are there particular barriers from legacy systems?
- How often do you share data with other organisations, and do you find this useful?

Are there opportunities to use new technology to improve workflows and systems, such as predictive analytics and AI?

TBC's three-year [Corporate Plan](#) included a specific target to ensure that more people can access council services digitally / digital enhancement with partners and within Council housing stock.

The Council recognises it needs to make use of more modern and flexible technological solutions as a key foundation for improving the customer experience, service efficiency and effectiveness.

The Council's ICT Strategy runs to March 2025 and will be reviewed in line with the new Corporate Strategy. Further this Strategy will form a key priority for review within the Council's forthcoming Peer Challenge. The focus of the Strategy has been the journey towards digital transformation in order to support the Corporate Plan. The current Strategy has 5 themes, including:

Digital by Design

The focus of this theme is to deliver digital services enabling access for customers when and where they want whilst delivering efficiencies for the organisation. Customer portals have been delivered through a new website and have moved customer contact to digital channels freeing up staff time for more complex cases and customers who prefer face to face contact.

Information is available on all Council Services with a view to maximising digital contacts, thus reducing the need to contact the Council directly.

The consistent monitoring of enquiries and customer services data allow for a flexible approach to reception and face to face services. An intelligence led service offer based on changing citizen demand patterns resulted in continued reception at the Assembly rooms for in-person visits.

Our web chat service continues to develop with more customers year on year making use of its access.

	<p>Working Smarter The implementation of home-based end user technology that is modern and reliable. This has supported hybrid homeworking.</p> <p>Better use of Intelligence, knowledge and Insight Power BI has been used to produce a dashboard for Customer Services, continually reporting on customer interactions and telephony data to help inform demand resourcing. Expanded use for Power BI is currently being explored.</p> <p>We have continued to achieve gold standard from Geo Place and earlier in the year were awarded Platinum as part of the 2023 Exemplar awards. Geo Place manage the central address data repository for the UK and accuracy of our data is essential both for our systems and our submission obligations.</p> <p>Fit Future Technology The focus for this theme is around maintaining modern, flexible and effective technology with a Cloud first approach. It includes modernising the telephony system.</p>
<p>3. Your plans to reduce wasteful spend within your organisation and systems.</p> <p>I know we will share the aim to reduce waste wherever we can and, while you have all made huge strides in recent years, no organisation is ever 100% efficient. You should set out your plans to reduce wasteful or 'gold-plated' spend.</p>	<p>The Council has a strong track record of financial management and strategic financial planning which has ensured its financial sustainability and resilience in the face of reductions in Government funding.</p> <p>In 2022/23 the external Auditor's Annual Report concluded that:</p> <p><i>"Overall we are satisfied the Council has appropriate arrangements in place to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. We have not identified</i></p>

Questions to consider:

- How do you approach identifying and reducing waste in the organisation? How do you monitor progress?
- Where have you followed invest to save and what was the result?
- How much time and money do you spend on staff EDI training (internal and external), networks, and other programmes? How many EDI Champions do you have as an organisation? How do you log and report the time and money spent on EDI related activity? How do you assess the effectiveness of that training?
- What percentage of total staff budget is spent on a) agency and b) consultants? How do you assess value for money on agency & consultancy spend and what are your plans to reduce use / costs? How many of these consultants or agency staff have been in place for over a year?
- What governance structures do you use to ensure accountability of spend?
- Do you share office functions with other councils and if so, how useful do you find this?
- If you share external training costs with neighbouring councils, how do you factor our duplications of service between your council and your upper-tier council (if you have one)?
- If you have one, what is your assessment and experience of working with an elected mayor, combined authority, or devolution deal?
- What proportion of your paybill is spend on trade union facility time?

any significant weaknesses and have not raised any key recommendations.”

and:

“Overall we are satisfied the Council has appropriate arrangements in place to ensure it manages risks to its financial sustainability. We have not identified any significant weaknesses and have not raised any key recommendations”

The budgets of the Council go through a rigorous scrutiny programme before being approved by Council. This includes:

- Early identification of budget issues.
- Internal review of any new requests for funding.
- Members seminars to consider new requests for both revenue and capital funding.
- Members budget workshops.
- Corporate Scrutiny before approval of the budget by Council.

£1m of reserves has been set aside for invest to save projects with a view to saving at least £500k per annum.

EDI forms part of the HR function. The Council does not directly employ any EDI professionals. EDI training is externally sourced.

Agency staff are normally used as short-term cover only and do not stay in excess of a year. In total only 3% of staffing costs is spent on agency staff.

	<p>Consultants are appointed to some capital projects to provide the expert knowledge required. Examples include on our £21m Future High Street Fund projects and projects relating to Tamworth Castle, which is an historic monument and requires specialist technical advice before undertaking any maintenance work. Consultant charges to revenue account for 1.7% of total salary budgets.</p> <p>We continue to make use of and invest in our shared services (as detailed above) which provides the authority with skills not currently employed 'in house'.</p>
<p>4. The barriers preventing progress that the government can help to reduce or remove</p>	<p>Create a stable financial planning environment for local government so it can plan for the medium term, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-year financial settlement to provide certainty and enable future planning • Remove Council Tax referendum limits and more support for local decision making • Ability to set our own planning fees • Ending competitive bidding for funding (UKSPF etc) <p>Increased awareness of policy change impacts on housing/landlord functions by ensuring sufficient new burdens funding is provided to support those changes.</p> <p>Additional support and consideration of the local impact of asylum dispersal including community cohesion, impact on housing stock etc.</p>

Simplify the Statement of Accounts to make them more understandable for users. This would include reducing reporting requirements on pensions and changing the valuation methodology for some classes of assets to reduce valuation and audit costs.

DRAFT

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