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
1. How have you 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, 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:	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: **Customer Service** – Reception Facilities at the Assembly Rooms operating with an acceleration of digital platforms allowing citizen contact and 24hr electronic access. **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. 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.

• 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.

Working Smarter
The implementation of home-based end user technology that is modern and reliable. This has supported hybrid homeworking.

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.

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.

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.

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.	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. In 2022/23 the external Auditor's Annual Report concluded that: *"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*

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.

	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. 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'.
4. The barriers preventing progress that the government can help to reduce or remove	Create a stable financial planning environment for local government so it can plan for the medium term, including: • 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) Increased awareness of policy change impacts on housing/landlord functions by ensuring sufficient new burdens funding is provided to support those changes. Additional support and consideration of the local impact of asylum dispersal including community cohesion, impact on housing stock etc.

	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.

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