

Cabinet

9 July 2024

Productivity Plan

For Decision

Cabinet Member and Portfolio:
Cllr N Ireland, Leader of the Council

Local Councillor(s):
Cllr

Executive Director:
M Prosser, Chief Executive

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Report Status: Public (the exemption paragraph is N/A)

Brief Summary:

All local authorities have been required to produce Productivity Plans in response to a Written Ministerial Statement made by the Secretary of State of the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) on 5 February 2024, following the Local Government Finance Settlement for 2024-25. The Minister subsequently wrote to all local authorities setting out the themes that the Plans should cover and requiring that the Plans receive member endorsement before being returned to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities on 19 July alongside publication on the relevant local authority's website.

Recommendation:

That Cabinet agree to the content and publication of the proposed Productivity Plan prior to 19 July.

Reason for Recommendation:

All local authorities are required to ensure their own productivity plan has member oversight and endorsement, following which DLUHC have requested that each local authority returns their own plan to DLUHC by 19 July

1. **Background**

- 1.1 In a written Ministerial Statement following the Local Government Finance Settlement for 2024-25 the Secretary of State DLUHC set out the requirement for local authorities to develop and share productivity plans, with the aim that the plans “will set out how local authorities will improve service performance and reduce wasteful expenditure, for example on consultants or discredited equality, diversity and inclusion programmes. Government will monitor these plans, and funding settlements in future will be informed by performance against these plans.”
- 1.2 Both the statement and a subsequent letter from the Minister for Local Government (attached as an annex to the draft plan for consideration by Cabinet) made clear the expectation that each local authority’s productivity plan would cover four main areas:
 - (i) transformation of services to make better use of resources
 - (ii) opportunities to take advantage of advances in technology and make better use of data to inform decision making and service design;
 - (iii) ways to reduce wasteful spend within systems, including specific consideration of expenditure on consultants and discredited staff Equality, Diversity and Inclusion programmes; and
 - (iv) barriers preventing activity that Government can help to reduce or remove.
- 1.3 All local authorities are required to ensure their own productivity plan has member oversight and endorsement, following which DLUHC have requested that each local authority returns their own plan to DLUHC by 19 July having also made the plan available to residents via their website.
- 1.4 The Minister for Local Government has advised that individual plans will not be rated or scored. However, the Minister for Local Government will be chairing a panel to consider the themes and evidence from the plans which will include both the Office for Local Government and the Local Government Association.

2. **Proposed content of Dorset Council's Productivity Plan**

2.2 When drafting the Plan we have taken into account the firm steer from DLUHC that developing the Plans should not impose an excessive burden and should be based on existing activity and plans within their local authority.

2.3 As a result we have taken the following approach with respect to the four themes Ministers have requested for inclusion in each plan:

(i) Transformation of services to make better use of resources

2.4 This section sets out a summary of changes taken by Dorset Council to transform its service delivery since its creation whilst referencing ongoing transformation activity and its expected impact. It also provides examples of preventative approaches undertaken by the Council to reduce demand on its services.

(ii) Opportunities to take advantage of advances in technology and make better use of data to inform decision making and service design;

2.4 This section references the Council's existing Data and Business Intelligence Strategy, Dorset Council's Digital Vision and the benefits of sharing data via Dorset's Integrated Care System.

(iii) ways to reduce wasteful spend within systems, including specific consideration of expenditure on consultants and discredited staff Equality, Diversity and Inclusion programmes

2.5 The section sets out ongoing and previous work the Council has undertaken to reduce expenditure and the links between this activity and current transformation plans.

2.6 The section also provides detail about Dorset Council's expenditure on agency workers and consultants, making clear the very small proportion both form of the Council's overall staff budget (0.35% of total staff budget for agency workers and 0.96% of total staff budget for consultants). Additionally, it is made clear that any ongoing Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training is limited to the Council's statutory obligations with respect to the Public Sector Equality Duty.

(iv) barriers preventing activity that Government can help to reduce or remove.

- 2.6 This section sets out the specific challenges Dorset Council faces based on Dorset's geography and socioeconomic circumstances where the Council would welcome support from central government, whilst also highlighting more general areas where central government could benefit all local authorities, including Dorset Council.
- 2.7 The metrics to support the productivity plan are being developed alongside the new Council Plan to ensure synergies and efficiencies in performance reporting. The performance information will become available once we've concluded that process and will ensure a close alignment of the reporting to the themes and priorities in the new council plan, including showing how performance monitoring links to underpinning the delivery of those priorities. The information will also be open to our residents, allowing transparent monitoring of progress in the outcomes associated with the council's strategy.

3. **Financial Implications**

None

4. **Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Implications**

4.1 None recognised at this stage, as this report is a summary of current approaches that we are taking in the sections required to compile the attached productivity plan.

5. **Well-being and Health Implications**

None

6. **Implications**

None

7. **Risk Assessment**

7.1 HAVING CONSIDERED: the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Medium. We would not be complying with a process required by central government.

Residual Risk: Low assuming approval and timely submission.

8. **Equalities Impact Assessment**

8.1 Not Required

9. **Appendices**

9.1 Draft Productivity Plan and Letter from the Minister for Local Government

10. **Background Papers**

10.1 None

11. **Report Sign Off**

11.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)