

Report To:	CABINET
Date:	16 SEPTEMBER 2024
Heading:	PRODUCTIVITY PLANS
Executive Lead Member:	LEADER
Ward/s:	ALL
Key Decision:	NO
Subject to Call-In:	NO

Purpose of Report

Following recent submission to the Minister for Local Government, to present Ashfield's Productivity Plan to Cabinet as an information item.

Recommendation(s)

For Cabinet to note the Productivity Plan which was submitted to the Minister for Local Government on 19th July 2024.

For Cabinet to note the Council's strong financial position and ongoing focus to identify savings and efficiencies whilst delivering service excellence.

Reasons for Recommendation(s)

The Council has been required to produce a Productivity Plan and submit to the Minister for Local Government by 19th July 2024.

The Council's Productivity Plan was endorsed by the Leader on 15th July 2024 and submitted in accordance with the required timelines.

The Productivity Plan is now required to be published on the Council's website.

Alternative Options Considered

Timeline for submission – there were no alternative options as the required timeline was set by the Minister for Local Government.

Content of the Productivity Plan – requirements were flexible regarding the content of the productivity plans within the five broad questions set by Government. There was no required template for completion.

Detailed Information

Information/Background

On 16 April, the Council received a letter from Simon Hoare, Minister for Local Government, formally setting out the requirement for each local authority to produce a productivity plan, following the 2024/25 Local Government Finance Settlement announcement.

The letter stated: -

- New productivity plans will help Government to understand what is already working well and where there are key gaps and lessons learned – country wide themes.
- No formal template or excessive burden – expect plans to be 3 or 4 pages in length.
- No specification of list of metrics – expect some understanding of how local authorities will monitor and assess productivity plans and their delivery.
- Four key questions expected to be incorporated into each plan: -
 1. How have you 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. What are your plans to reduce wasteful spend within your organisation and systems? (You should set out your plans to reduce wasteful or gold plated spend)
 4. What are the barriers to preventing progress that the Government can help to reduce or remove (govt or the market)?

Additional guidance from (the then) DLUHC clarified: -

- The preference to keep productivity plans light touch – use as opportunity to showcase best of what each local authority is doing, what they have already done and what is needed from Government.
- To ensure the plan incorporates a mention of how productivity is or will be measured.
- That the submission of plans will not be used to individually assess each local authority.
- Productivity plans will be reviewed by a panel of experts including DLUHC (now MHCLG), Oflog, Local Government Association.
- The review of all plans will be focussed on ‘collective’ local government sector key themes to inform the next Spending Review.
- Prior to submission, the plan will require Member oversight although there is flexibility in how each local authority can demonstrate Member endorsement of the plan – for example, the Productivity Plan does not require formal Cabinet approval before submission.

Ashfield's Productivity Plan

The Council's Productivity Plan is appended to this report. The focus of the plan is directly aligned to the Productivity Institute's research of 3 key areas of where productivity policies should be focussed – adaptive organisational design, technology, and investment in human capital. As such, our Productivity Plan is aligned to the Council's ambition is to be 'Great' across all our services, recognising our priorities for the future are underpinned by a specific focus on innovation and improvement, driven by digital and service transformation, an enhanced focus on identifying savings and income to support the Medium-Term Financial Strategy, whilst improving the customer journey and experience across all services.

Kept to within 4 pages the Productivity Plan summarises: -

- What the Council has already achieved – including a link to the Council's draft Statement of Accounts 2023/24.
- Future focus to improve productivity and reduce spend – aligned to the Council's 2024/25 Budget Setting Report.
- How we will measure delivery of the plan – recognising ongoing enhancement of our performance management framework which now incorporates Oflog benchmarking.
- Barriers to delivery – the content for this section also incorporates some recent suggestions made by the District Councils Network.

Implications

Corporate Plan:

The Productivity Plan aligns to Corporate Priorities particularly Innovate and Improve - enhanced focus on identifying savings and income to support the Medium-Term Financial Strategy. The Productivity Plan also positively aligns to the Council's recent Corporate Peer Challenge which found strong delivery of services and a positive financial position.

Legal:

No legal implications. [RLD 09/08/2024]

Finance: No direct financial implications. [PH 08/08/2024].

Budget Area	Implication
General Fund – Revenue Budget	The Productivity Plan considers financial aspects such as costs, efficiencies and future plans and therefore aligns to financial reporting and the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.
General Fund – Capital Programme	
Housing Revenue Account – Revenue Budget	
Housing Revenue Account – Capital Programme	

Risk:

Risk	Mitigation
Ability to robustly understand and measure productivity across the organisation.	The Council acknowledges the ongoing need to improve data management and will be focussed on finalising the development of specialist capacity as a central resource for data management, to build an enhanced performance and data insight service. We are ambitious in our ongoing development of our datasets within the Council's Knowledge Hub and continue to embed this new approach to data sharing to inform strategy, policy and decision making, whilst also driving our improvement journey towards excellence. An enhanced approach to service reviews also incorporates a review of productivity.
The most significant central barrier to local productivity is single-year finance settlements from Government.	The Government has indicated a move to multi-year funding settlements to assist Council's to plan more effectively for the medium term.

Human Resources:

Following this report any service reviews will incorporate a review of productivity and seek employee engagement for ideas. Full consultation in line with HR policies will be undertaken if there is any direct impact on employees. (KH13.08.24)

Environmental/Sustainability:

There are no direct implications. Any proposals for increased productivity through service redesign will undergo environmental impact assessment.

Equalities:

There are no direct implications. Any proposals for increased productivity through service redesign will undergo equalities impact assessment.

Other Implications:

None

Reason(s) for Urgency

Not applicable

Reason(s) for Exemption

Not applicable

Background Papers

Ashfield District Council Productivity plan 2024/25

Report Author and Contact Officer

Jo Froggatt

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR – POLICY AND PERFORMANCE

joanne.froggatt@ashfield.gov.uk

01623 457328

Sponsoring Executive Director

Craig Bonar

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - TRANSFORMATION

craig.bonar@ashfield.gov.uk

01623 457203