

## Productivity Plan 2024

This plan provides a summary of the council’s activity to improve and monitor productivity, as well as any barriers from Central Government that could be removed to improve our efficiency and effectiveness. The plan fulfils the DLUHC requirement for a productivity plan.

The plan describes activity already in place through the Council’s existing policies and procedures as well as through the Council’s identified Transformation Programme.

### 1. Transforming Service Design and Delivery

In August 2021, DLUHC commissioned reviews of the Council’s financial stability and its governance arrangements. These reviews made a series of independent recommendations which were taken forward. Since then Peterborough City Council has started a substantial programme of transformation. The Council has made significant progress, which has been acknowledged by the appointed Improvement Panel. The Council was runner up in the ‘most improved council’ category at the LGA awards 2023.

Support for transformation already put in place by the Council includes:

- A **Corporate Delivery Unit** of experienced programme and project managers to support our transformation programme and to support Directors and Service Leads to manage their transformation plans effectively
- A **Transformation Reserve** is available for colleagues to bid for funding activity to deliver service transformation, productivity and efficiency savings that align with our City Priorities. [The reserves policy](#) sets out the strict criteria and expectation of a return on investment.
- The pro-active, voluntary continuation of our **Improvement Panel**, to guarantee independent oversight of the next phase of improvement.
- A new **Performance & Intelligence** function for Peterborough, providing both insight into progress against our strategy and operational improvement data to key services. This function leads on monitoring productivity KPIs as part of Corporate Strategy reporting.

Our Transformation Portfolios are based around the pillars of our Corporate Strategy:

- **Prevention, Independence and Resilience** – to help & support our residents early on in their lives and prevent them from slipping into crisis.
- **Economy and Inclusive Growth** – to maximise economic growth and prosperity in an inclusive and environmentally sustainable way
- **Sustainable Future City Council** – to adjust how we work, serve and enable, informed by strong data and insight capability
  - *Note: we have recently insourced many of our supporting services and have returned to a single, combined corporate services function with great potential for efficiency savings through operational synergies and productivity improvements.*

### 2. Improving the use of Data and Technology

The council has established clear Digital and Data strategies. These form the blueprint for all of our technology decision-making, ensuring that we continually improve our systems and use of data.

Our current programme of Digital projects includes:

- A substantial programme of work to improve our IT and Data infrastructure, including **Cyber Hardening, Data Centre decommissioning**, the implementation of a **Modern Data Platform** and a **Data Archiving** programme.
- The implementation of a new **Education Case Management System**.
- **Data Portals** for our children's social care recording system.
- The end-to-end replacement of our separate systems for **HR, Financial Planning and Contract Management** with a single, integrated system.
- Implementing a new **whole council CRM and Front Door Service**.
- Replacing our existing systems for **Legal services, Planning services and Licensing**.

In common with most large organisations, we do experience challenges with legacy systems including access to data, compatibility, limited integration and end of support. These issues are decreasing as we procure replacement systems when licences expire, using the Digital and Data Strategies to inform effective procurement decision-making. We have established effective project and programme monitoring processes which allow us to control and review our Digital programme.

We have also established an AI policy and strategy. The use of AI has the potential to enable substantial productivity gains. We are in the early stages of developing our use of AI, but we do already have some very positive exemplar use cases including:

- An organisation-wide trial of **Co-pilot** to improve productivity
- **Machine translation** of Council documents
- **Automated triage of planning applications** to reduce review times
- Trialling '**Magic Notes**' software to improve social care recording
- Introducing **Robotic Process Automation** to improve process efficiency and integration

We are in discussion with local academic partners to establish a data and AI ethics board, to ensure that our use of data and AI for the benefit of the community remains safe and appropriate.

### 3. Reducing waste and improving efficiency

The Council has a range of initiatives in place to reduce waste and improve efficiency.

- The Council has a savings programme which is tracked in detail. Progress is regularly reported to the Council's leadership team.
- The Council delivered 99% (£14.4m) of identified savings in 2023. The Council's invest to save programme is managed with and linked to the Transformation Programme – bids for funding must be matched to Transformation Portfolio objectives.

The Council has a small but effective EDI programme costing £22.3k in total. The Council's total spend on agency and consultancy staff is £14.8m, 18.9% of the Council's total staffing budget. In total, 31 agency and consultancy staff members have been contracted to the council for over a year. The council operates a weekly Workforce Board which reviews all requests to appoint agency staff. Monthly reporting on agency numbers and spending is presented to the Council Leadership Team.

### 4. Barriers preventing progress

There are a number of barriers preventing our transformation progress that central government could help to reduce or remove:

- Recent years have seen substantial demographic change in Peterborough, including significant population growth and changes in levels of need.

**We would like the funding formula to be reviewed to ensure a fair and proportionate allocation for Peterborough.**

- We would like to see a review of provision for **increased Flexibility around Council Tax and more support for local decision making.**
- We would like to see **multi-year financial settlements** to provide certainty and stability to enable us to plan for the longer term.
- The bidding and reporting process for competitive funding pots is time consuming and resource intensive with a lack of feedback. Attention and resources could be focused on outcomes and results by the **simplification, removal of red tape, and a practical visit-based approach to monitoring sites more frequently for competitive funding.**
- Targets being imposed on the NHS, particularly for acute care, are having a detrimental effect on Local Government due to resource focus, management pressure and reputational risks – this could be improved by **clarifying responsibilities around health and social care and prevention and monitoring NHS productivity more effectively to drive the right behaviours - (eg prevention not acute, investment in front line not in back office staff).**
- Increased awareness of policy change impacts on Local Government (eg NWL, SEND, Housing/landlord changes or new burdens) – this could be improved by **implementing changes to processes for policy development to include improved assessment of impact, and/or ensuring that sufficient new burdens funding is provided to support changes.**
- Improving the **join-up of Central Government departments** when working with Local Authorities, to prevent contradictory or inefficient requirements.

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