

To: Leader and Members of the Executive Board

(Councillors D Wright, Barnett, Bell, Clews, Gosling, H Phillips, Reilly, Ridley, Ririe, Simpson, Symonds and Whapples)

For the information of other Members of the Council

For general enquiries please contact the Democratic Services Team on 01827 719221 or via e-mail – democraticservices@northwarks.gov.uk

For enquiries about specific reports please contact the officer named in the reports.

The agenda and reports are available in large print and electronic accessible formats if requested.

EXECUTIVE BOARD AGENDA

17 JULY 2024

The Executive Board will meet in The Chamber, The Council House, South Street, Atherstone on Wednesday, 17 July 2024 at 6.30pm.

The meeting can also be viewed on the Council's YouTube channel at NorthWarks - YouTube.

AGENDA

- 1 Evacuation Procedure.**
- 2 Apologies for Absence / Members away on official Council business.**
- 3 Disclosable Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests.**

4 **Public Participation**

Up to twenty minutes will be set aside for members of the public to put questions to elected Members.

Members of the public wishing to address the Board must register their intention to do so by 9:30am two working days prior to the meeting. Participants are restricted to five minutes each.

If you wish to put a question to the meeting, please register by email to democraticservices@northwarks.gov.uk or telephone 01827 719221 / 01827 719237.

Once registered to speak, the person asking the question has the option to either:

- a) attend the meeting in person at the Council Chamber;
- b) attend remotely via Teams; or
- c) request that the Chair reads out their written question.

If attending in person, precautions will be in place in the Council Chamber to protect those who are present however this will limit the number of people who can be accommodated so it may be more convenient to attend remotely.

If attending remotely an invitation will be sent to join the Teams video conferencing for this meeting. Those registered to speak should dial the telephone number and ID number (provided on their invitation) when joining the meeting to ask their question. However, whilst waiting they will be able to hear what is being said at the meeting. They will also be able to view the meeting using the YouTube link provided (if so, they made need to mute the sound on YouTube when they speak on the phone to prevent feedback).

- 5 **Minutes of the Executive Board held on 11 June 2024** – copies herewith, to be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION AND DECISION (WHITE PAPERS)

- 6 **North Warwickshire Borough Council Productivity Plan 2024** - Report of the Interim Corporate Director – Resources (Section 151 Officer)

Summary

The Local Government Finance Settlement was published in December 2023 and included within the information received was a requirement for Council's to publish a Productivity Plan. Further detail was received in a letter dated 16 April 2024 to Chief Executives from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, this is attached at Appendix A.

This report presents the Productivity Plan for North Warwickshire Borough Council which must be submitted to Government by 19 July 2024 and published on the Council's website.

The Contact Officer for this report is Alison Turner (719234).

7 **Environmental Crime Delegations** – Report of the Chief Executive

Summary

The purpose of this report is to delegate power to staff within the Environmental Health team with regard to the enforcement of environmental crimes.

The Contact Officer for this report is Steve Maxey (719438).

8 **High Street / Business Grant Scheme Panel**

Summary

A Grant Scheme has been introduced to offer small grants to businesses. The Board is invited to consider establishing a Panel of Councillors, supported by Officers, to determine the allocation of the Business Grant Scheme.

The Contact Officer for this report is Becky Evans (719346).

9 **Local Government Association Peer Review** – Report of the Chief Executive

The purpose of this report is to provide information for Members on the forthcoming Peer Review.

The Contact Officer for this report is Steve Maxey (719438).

10 **Exclusion of the Public and Press**

To consider, in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, whether it is in the public interest that the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business, on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by Schedule 12A to the Act.

11 **Local Government Association Peer Review** – Report of the Chief Executive

The Contact Officer for this report is Steve Maxey (719438).

12 **Housing Development** – Report of the Chief Executive

The Contact Officer for this report is Steve Maxey (719438).

- 13 **Exempt Extract of the Minutes of the Executive Board** held on 11 June 2024 – copies herewith, to be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

STEVE MAXEY
Chief Executive

NORTH WARWICKSHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

11 June 2024

Present: Councillor D Wright in the Chair

Councillors Barnett, Bell, Chapman, Clews, Dirveiks, Hobley, Jenns, H Phillips, Ridley, Simpson and Symonds.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Gosling (Substitute Councillor Dirveiks), Reilly (Substitute Councillor Jenns), Ririe (Substitute Councillor Hobley) and Whapples (Substitute Councillor Chapman).

1 **Declarations of Personal or Prejudicial Interest**

None were declared at the meeting.

2 **Minutes of the Executive Board held on 18 March 2024**

That, subject to it being noted that Minute Nos 72 and 75 are resolved, not recommended items, the minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 18 March 2024, copies having been circulated, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3 **Supplementary Estimate – Leisure and Open Space Section 106 Receipts**

The Director of Leisure and Community Development sought approval for the provision of a supplementary estimate within the capital programme through which to use Section 106 receipts to enhance leisure and open space provision in the Borough.

Resolved:

That the requested supplementary estimate of up to £223,877 for the enhancement of leisure and open space provision in North Warwickshire, as detailed in sections 4.1 and 5.1.2 of the appended report of the Director of Leisure and Community Development, be approved.

4 **Atherstone Public Spaces Protection Order and Consultation**

The Chief Executive provided Members with an update on the progress with the Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) and consultation in relation to Atherstone Town Centre and sought approval for the Order to be made.

Resolved:

- a That the results from the consultation be noted; and**
- b That the Public Spaces Protection Order, as set out in the report of the Chief Executive, be made.**

5 Exclusion of the Public and Press

Resolved:

That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business, on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by Schedule 12A to the Act.

6 Performance Management

The Chief Executive sought Member approval for more detailed and improved performance reporting.

Resolved:

That recommendations a and b, as set out in the report of the Chief Executive, be approved.

7 Environmental Health

The Chief Executive reported on an increase in the cost of the Environmental Health Service due to a Job Evaluation.

Resolved:

That recommendations a and b, as set out in the report of the Chief Executive, be approved, and a further progress report be brought back to the Community and Environment Board in six to nine months' time.

8 Housing Company

The Chief Executive presented a high-level business case for the Council establishing a housing company.

Resolved:

That recommendations a, b and c, as set out in the report of the Chief Executive, be approved.

7 Exempt Extract of the minutes of the Executive Board held on 12 February 2024

That, subject to it being noted that Minute No 75 is a resolved, not recommended item, the exempt extract of the minutes of the Executive Board held on 14 March 2024, copies having been previously circulated, were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

D Wright
CHAIR

Agenda Item No 6

Executive Board

17 July 2024

**North Warwickshire Borough
Council Productivity Plan 2024**

**Report of the Interim
Corporate Director – Resources (Section
151 Officer)**

1 Summary

- 1.1 The Local Government Finance Settlement was published in December 2023 and included within the information received was a requirement for Council's to publish a Productivity Plan. Further detail was received in a letter dated 16 April 2024 to Chief Executives from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, this is attached at Appendix A.
- 1.2 This report presents the Productivity Plan for North Warwickshire Borough Council which must be submitted to Government by 19 July 2024 and published on the Council's website.

Recommendations that Executive resolves to:

- a Note the requirement from the Government, letter attached in Appendix A for the Council to produce and adopt a Productivity Plan; and**
- b Approve the Productivity Plan in Appendix B for submission to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities by the 19 July 2024 deadline. Delegating minor changes to the plan to the Chief Executive in Consultation with the Leader.**

2 Background

- 2.1 The letter details that the Government is reviewing productivity across all public services and as such all Councils are being asked to produce productivity plans. The plans will help the Government to understand what is already working, what the common themes are and whether there are any gaps.
- 2.2 The Government have not issued a common proforma and are not requesting prescribed metrics or performance indicators, however the plan should consider the following four areas where appropriate:
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.

2.3 The productivity plans will be considered by a new productivity review panel, made up of sector experts including the Office for Local Government and the Local Government Association. The plan must be endorsed by members and submitted by 19th July 2024.

3 Next Steps

3.1 The Productivity Plan for this Council based on the four areas raised in the DLUCH letter in Appendix A is attached at Appendix B for members to consider, amend where appropriate and approve submission to DLUCH by 19 July 2024.

4 Report Implications

4.1 Financial Implications

4.1.2 There are no direct financial implications in this report.

4.2 Legal Implications

4.2.1 There are no legal implications in this report

The Contact Officer for this report is Alison Turner (719234).

Background Papers

Local Government Act 1972 Section 100D, as substituted by the Local Government Act, 2000 Section 97

Background Paper No	Author	Nature of Background Paper	Date



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.

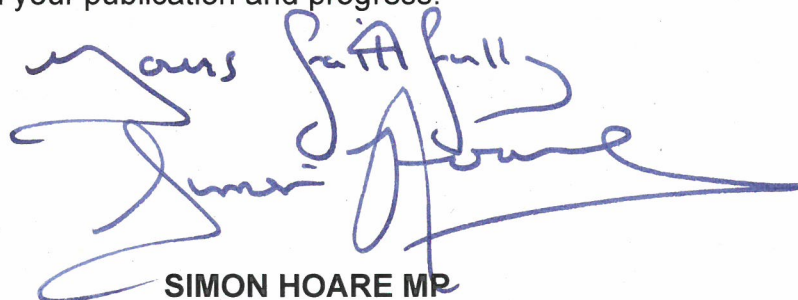
You must ensure that there is member oversight and endorsement of the plan before it is submitted, and the plan must also be uploaded to your website so that residents can see it. You should consider how you will update the plans and report on progress on a regular basis. The plans should also contain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



Productivity Plan 2024

Appendix B

INTRODUCTION

As part of the Local Government Finance Settlement issued to Councils in December 2023 was a requirement for Councils to produce productivity plans. In April 2024 the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUCH) issued Chief Executives with a letter detailing the type of things the productivity plans should include, but they were not prescriptive in terms of providing a standard proforma or requesting specific data.

The Government have acknowledged that there has already been a great deal of work in recent years on improving productivity and efficiency. But with the current financial climate and impacts of lockdown and post lockdown Councils are being asked to continue finding new ways of working and delivering. The aim of the productivity plans is to understand what is working well and what more the Government can do to enable new opportunities.

The Government have requested that the plan should consider the following four areas where appropriate:

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.

This plan will be used alongside the Transformation Plan and Medium-Term Financial Strategy and updated regularly to ensure it is up to date and delivering the Council Corporate Plan.

1. HOW YOU HAVE TRANSFORMED THE WAY YOU DESIGN AND DELIVER SERVICES TO MAKE BETTER USE OF RESOURCES

North Warwickshire Borough Council has been on a transformation journey for the last few years delivering improved services, increased productivity, and efficiencies. This has been delivered through IT transformation, Service redesign, Working with Partners, and Commercialism. This will continue as detailed in this productivity plan, along with the Councils Transformation plan and Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

IT TRANSFORMATION

- The use of IT has facilitated working remotely, meeting over Teams and led to the Council introducing new ways of working. Hybrid working is encouraged for most services increasing productivity and reducing the need for office space. Since Covid-19 the Councils more flexible approach to working has assisted with staff retention and recruitment and given the opportunity to rent office space to other partners and generate additional income.
- A comprehensive programme of IT replacement and enhancement with digital by design and automation at the centre. The digital strategy will continue to be reviewed and delivered as this can generate significant efficiency savings and increased customer service.
- A new hosted Environmental Health system with more functionality for officers and customers.
- A new Planning and Local Land Charge system to improve productivity and customer service and achieve compliance.
- A new website with updated look and feel, enhanced search and responsive design for mobile devices. The aspiration is to implement a channel shift in the way customers transact with the Council. We will not close any method down but make it much easier to use self-service.
- The implementation of a web-based GIS module.
- The implementation of an email and text subscription marketing solution, that allows us to send personalised bulletins to our subscriber.
- The introduction of when 'applying for council house/accommodation' form. The process has been designed to 'carry out' the initial assessment by intelligent form design.
- During Covid-19 we implemented a hybrid mail solution.
- We have installed new Artificial Intelligence cameras for Fly Tipping within parts of our rural borough to help reduce fly-tipping. The solution generates alerts for movement (people, cars, wildlife) rather than officers trawling through old fashioned CCTV cameras that record everything.

SERVICE REDESIGN

- Virtual Reception - During Covid-19 the main reception was closed which led to customers finding new ways of interacting with the Council. When services started to open again the reception was reviewed and a decision was made to have a virtual reception for this Council. In our reception there is an iPad with a n officer from the customer contact team managing queries from the public. This has been in place for a year and needs to be reviewed to ensure it is meeting the needs of customers whilst remaining an efficient way of managing the reception.
- Waste changes - The waste collections were being reviewed with the use of the InCab technology on rounds and potential options for optimisation. This has not been delivered yet as the Government decided to introduce food waste collections which impact on collections. This project will continue to be developed when the Government give more information on timescales.
- A newly formed Transformation team has been implemented to facilitate the delivery of the ambitious transformation plan its needs to buy in from all staff to ensure successful delivery.

WORKING WITH PARTNERS

- Office Rationalisation – sharing with other agencies police, DWP, county council, Town Council. Improving customer service by co locating DWP with Council and generating additional income by utilising the space more efficiently.

- To maintain services due to reductions in funding the Council has worked with Towns/Parishes, Community Groups to secure the services the public want to keep.
- Leisure Facilities – the Council have worked with partners such as County Council and NHS to develop LUF 1 & 2 bids for a new leisure facility in Atherstone. Both bids were unsuccessful, so the Council is looking at options along with partners to build a new facility in Polesworth and replace the current fifty-year-old leisure facility with pool in Atherstone. This is all part of the overall strategy for leisure. To reduce ongoing revenue costs and deliver facilities fit for purpose and low cost.

COMMERCIALISM

- Review of Fees and Charges – During 2024/25 Tax Set members approved a charging strategy for fees and charges. The strategy included increasing fees by at least inflation and looking to at least break even on services such as Cess Pool emptying and green waste collection.
- Leisure Services – The Council agreed to develop a LATCO for delivery of the leisure function, however with the changes in VAT rules this changed to financial implications making this option marginal. Therefore, at the Tax Set meeting in February members approved a fundamental review of the provision of leisure services in order to reduce the subsidy at approximately £1.3 million per annum.
- Single Persons Discount and empty homes reviews – These reviews take place on a regular basis (every 2 years) as the loss of income through incorrect discounts can be significant.
- New Build Units to increase housing stock – The programme continues to build much needed housing and to utilise the Right to Buy receipts. The Council has been looking at a Housing Company as a vehicle to deliver more houses and generate additional income for reinvestment.
- The Transformation plan will be measured by cashable efficiency savings, relevant key performance indicators and consultation with customers. Reductions and increased income of £2 million is required over the period of the MTFS.

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

This Council is refining its approach to performance reporting with the Performance Management Framework Introducing new performance reporting with interactive reporting to allow for real-time data to help drive decisions and service improvements across the council. Power BI is an essential part of this review given its functionality in terms of producing complex reporting.

For the 2024/25 budget a public consultation exercise was carried out for the first time to capture residents' views on a number of topics including VFM for their Council Tax, use of Leisure and general satisfaction with the Council. This information was valuable to shaping the corporate plan and the budgetary decisions. More consultation with residents will continue to ensure our resources are directed to the issues they value most. This will ensure direct funding decisions in the Budget are linked to key issues identified by residents.

The Council will continue to work with partners on the Levelling Up agenda using data on key indicators within our communities to target interventions and support.

Use of data to target priority areas for Community Development work has been successful in directing funding and projects.

The Transformation programme has a number of new systems to implement all of which will contribute to better use and availability of data. This includes:

- A new hosted Finance System which has increased functionality for reporting which will assist in producing the data required for the numerous Statutory Government returns that have to be returned.
- A new InCab system for waste rounds, which includes real-time collections calendars for our residents and will assist in optimising collection rounds.
- NWBC are a partner of the Sherbourne Materials Recycling Facility which has technology which can determine the details of the waste and recycling rates etc, all data assists in working with residents to educate, increase recycling rates and deliver savings.
- A new hosted planning and local land charges system
- A new hosted payment management system which will allow re-occurring card payments and Direct Debits

3. YOUR PLANS TO REDUCE WASTEFUL SPEND WITHIN YOUR ORGANISATION AND SYSTEMS

This is already documented in the Councils transformation plan and [MTFS](#), but will continue to be reviewed and updated to ensure it is delivering the against the plans and remains appropriate.

Invest to Save is supported by this Council and as part of the 2024 Tax Set a specific fund was approved totalling £1m to use towards invest to save initiatives such as Asset Rationalisation, Commercialism. The council is currently reviewing its asset portfolio in order to identify assets that may have development potential, could be sold generating a capital receipt or need to be maintained. The Asset Management Plan will be based on this review and the capital programme will need to be amended to reflect this plan. Already the investment assets have been reviewed to ensure the rents are in line with the market to ensure a commercial approach is taken where appropriate. The Council has also been working with Housing Specialists to setup a housing company to build more housing to meet need and potentially generate income for reinvesting in Council services.

Agency and Interim Spend – The Council operates direct frontline services such as Waste Collection and Housing Maintenance and due to the nature of these services an agency budget is required to ensure these services can be delivered daily in the event of staff absences and vacancies. But this is being reviewed through service redesign such as ensuring resources are being maximised through optimising collection routes.

This Council is going through a significant period of change and delivery and as such there are interim staff for delivery of certain projects, Leisure Management, Asset Management and rationalisation, Implementation of New Finance System, Waste collection service redesign. When each project is delivered the Interim support will end. It is likely that the cost will be less than the reductions identified in most cases making these invest to save initiatives. This will be monitored, and a review of the project will include the cost of delivery compared to the reductions achieved and the service improvements.

Senior Management Restructure – The Council is currently implementing a new structure which is fit for purpose and sustainable based on a LGA DMA review late last year. In order to maintain service delivery, deliver the corporate plan priorities, ensure the MTFS is being delivered and the ambitious change agenda is implemented the two interim Directors will remain assisting the Chief Executive until the new structure is in place.

Service Delivery – Due to this Council being a relatively small borough council it already has a number of services which are shared or procured from other Councils. The largest shared

arrangement is with Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council (NBBC) for the Revenues and Benefits service which also includes the Civica system which is hosted at NBBC. Each council has its own staff delivering the service, but the management and system are operated on a shared basis. This arrangement has delivered reductions and efficiency savings and continues to improve productivity. Shared services also exist currently for Elections. These arrangements are reviewed regularly to ensure they are still offering Value for Money (VFM) and the service is still meeting performance targets. From April 2024 the Housing Grants function was taken back in house due to issues with performance.

Building control is procured through a partnership arrangement managed by Lichfield Council. Payroll is delivered using the Coventry IT system with NWBC staff inputting the data. The e learning module is purchased through Staffordshire County Council. Fraud service is delivered by Derby City Council from April 2024 and the Internal Audit function is provided by an internal resource working alongside the Combined Midlands Audit Partnership (CMAP). This Council is always open to opportunities to work with partners to deliver services and improve efficiency, each opportunity would be subject to a business case.

The Council Offices are shared with partners, Police, County Council and DWP and Town Council. All of which pay a rent to offset the costs of the building. It is important to keep this under review as maximising the office space and generating additional income assist with the MRFS. It also provides a more coordinated service to customers using more than one agency.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) is not a specific role within the Council its embedded into the organisation all officers are encouraged to consider EDI when developing policies, services etc and to use tools such as Equality Impact Assessments. Training is included with the corporate training plan on a rolling programme of topics over a 3-year period, this is predominately online and therefore low cost. If required specific courses are delivered on a mandatory basis to all staff.

This Council has an excellent working relationship with our union representatives, and they are included in Job Evaluations and moderation panels, have items on Management Team agendas and a monthly joint meeting with Management and HR. This relationship has been essential in the successful delivery of transformation and will continue particularly in this period of huge change where staff need support. This cost is not budgeted, as in percentage terms of the overall staffing budget it is negligible but the benefits to the organisation and staff are vast.

4. THE BARRIERS PREVENTING PROGRESS THAT THE GOVERNMENT CAN HELP TO REDUCE OR REMOVE

The most significant barriers to local productivity which the Government could assist with is single-year finance settlements. Without the clarity of medium-term funding councils cannot effectively plan and organise their resources. Along with the delays and uncertainty with fair funding, business rates retention and future of New Homes Bonus all of which have a massive impact on the Councils financial planning and sustainability depending on the outcomes.

Other issues which are barriers the Government should consider include the following:

- Advance engagement in development of funding initiatives and policies before implementation, to reduce bureaucracy and ensure they are fit for purpose.

- Greater flexibility to decide how to raise and spend money locally. To make decisions on whether certain services should be taken out of current Government funding methodology, such as Social Care?
- Take a view on Council services funding, should some services fully recover cost such as planning, whilst other services such as parks, leisure should they continue to be subsidised because of their value in terms of health and wellbeing initiatives potentially preventing costs on the NHS?
- Look at the funding formula to ensure sparsity and rural authorities are not disadvantaged.
- The number of specific, formula-based revenue grants and their separate reporting requirements – it would be much simpler and more efficient to roll all specific grants into a single provision in the Local Government Finance Settlement.
- Remove or reduce the wide range of separate one-off revenue and capital grant pots with onerous, costly, and counter-productive bidding processes potentially making the work involved more costly than the funding awarded.
- Complicated and inconsistent processes for submitting data returns to central government.
- Lack of join-up between central government departments on issues including housing, homelessness prevention, business support and asylum dispersal
- Excessive amount of information that is required in annual accounts or must be published under the transparency code.
- Lack of clear guidance on Audit backlogs putting additional pressure on capacity.
- The constraints on the use of Right to Buy receipts makes it difficult to build new affordable homes.
- Uncertainty over significant service changes such as funding for weekly food waste does not encourage Councils to go for efficiency/ productivity as early as possible because there is often funding offered when the change is forced by Government. Although this funding can often be capital only which leaves the Council picking up ongoing revenue implications.
- In addition to the full cost recovery on planning fees to eliminate the public subsidy of planning developments mentioned above, allow Councils to set local fees to resource quicker decisions or to prioritise developments which fit the local area better.

Conclusion

We are a small but ambitious Borough Council we have robust budget management and a challenging but positive MTF5 to ensure we can deliver the priorities in our Corporate Plan. We have already delivered a number of projects within our Transformation plan delivering improved productivity and financial savings, which will continue. The Council is currently going through a huge amount of change including a Senior Management restructure, a desire from members to be more commercial with setting up a housing company, a review of leisure management, assets, and a commitment to build two new leisure facilities. A busy agenda which will deliver for the residents and provide financial sustainability in the future.

Agenda Item No 7

Executive Board

17 July 2024

Report of the Chief Executive

Environmental Crime Delegations

1 Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to delegate power to staff within the Environmental Health team with regard to the enforcement of environmental crimes.

Recommendation to the Council

That the Environmental Health Manager, the Senior Pollution Control Officer and the Environmental Crime Officer be given the delegated powers set out in the report to act in accordance with the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

2 Report

- 2.1 Members will recall that at its last meeting, the Executive Board approved certain details with regard to a new role named Environmental Crime Officer. This role was created in order to increase the capacity the Council has for such crimes, for example fly tipping and littering. This post is now out to advert and the Council hopes to make an appointment shortly.
- 2.2 The Council has delegated a number of powers to Environmental Health staff however as this role is new and for the avoidance of doubt, it is suggested that the Board recommends to Council that the constitution be amended to give specific powers to the Environmental Crime Officer, the Environmental Health Manager and Senior Pollution Control Officer to issue fixed penalty notices in respect of offences relating to littering (section 88 of the Environmental Protection Act 1990) and fly tipping (sections 33ZA and 34ZA of the Environmental Protection Act 1990).

3 Report Implications

- 3.1 The detection of environmental crimes is an important part of the Council's overall strategic policies, in particular the 'Safe, Liveable, Locally Focussed Communities' aim.

The Contact Officer for this report is Steve Maxey (719438).

Agenda Item No 8

Executive Board

17 July 2024

Report of the Chief Executive

**High Street / Business Grant
Scheme Panel**

1 Summary

- 1.1 A Grant Scheme has been introduced to offer small grants to businesses. The Board is invited to consider establishing a Panel of Councillors, supported by Officers, to determine the allocation of the Business Grant Scheme.

Recommendation to the Board

That a Panel of Councillors is established, and the membership of that Panel be agreed, to determine the allocation of the High Street / Business Grant Scheme.

2 Consultation

- 2.1 Consultation has taken place with relevant Members and any comments received will be reported at the meeting.

3 Shop Front Grants

- 3.1 At its budget meeting, Full Council determined to establish a fund to support the high streets and local businesses through an open application process.

- 3.2 The purpose of the funding is to offer small grants to businesses in the three town centres and across North Warwickshire, to enable them to undertake small-scale external improvement works. The works will include things such as:

- Basic improvements to shopfronts
- Cleaning
- Repairs to building facades
- Signage
- Shutters
- Visual improvements to the shop windows of empty units

- 3.3 The scheme links with the Institute of Place Management reports, produced for Atherstone, Coleshill and Polesworth, which recommend the introduction of a small grants scheme to ‘...maintain the quality of shopfronts, shop displays and premises upkeep.’ It also supports the work of the Borough Council and the Town centre Partnerships, to improve vitality, visitor perception and the attractiveness of North Warwickshire.
- 3.4 Sixty percent of the funding will be split equally between the three towns, Atherstone, Coleshill and Polesworth/Dordon, with the remaining forty percent being available to any business operating across the Borough.
- 3.5 Grants will be sought from any independent customer-facing business (specifically retail) operating in North Warwickshire, including those operating through a franchise arrangement. The bigger retail chains, which have a centralised head office, will not be eligible to apply.

4 Panel

- 4.1 Once established, applications will be considered by a Panel at the end of each month.
- 4.2 The Board is asked to nominate Councillors to create a Panel, which is advised to include three Conservatives, two Labour and one Independent.
- 4.3 Councillors will be supported on the Panel with representation from Community Development, the Town Centre Partnerships, and the Heritage and Conservation Officer where appropriate.

5 Report Implications

5.1 Finance and Value for Money Implications

- 5.1.1 A fund totalling £100,000 has been established for use in 2024 / 25. It is important that the scheme is open and transparent and the decisions are made in line with the parameters agreed for this grant scheme. Before any grants are paid the appropriate checks will be required in terms of eligibility, proof of spend etc.

5.2 Safer Communities Implications

- 5.2.1 Through maintaining and improving the quality of shopfronts, graffiti and other anti-social behaviours will be discouraged.

5.3 Legal, Data Protection and Human Rights Implications

- 5.3.1 There are no specific legal, data protection or human rights implications arising directly out of this report.

5.4 Environment, Climate Change and Health Implications

5.4.1 Visual improvements will improve the local environment and increase pride of place.

5.5 Human Resources Implications

5.5.1 There are no human resource implications arising directly out of this report.

5.6 Risk Management Implications

5.6.1 There are no risks management implications arising directly out of this report.

5.7 Equalities Implications

5.7.1 There are no adverse equalities implications arising from this report. The fund is available to any independent business operating across the Borough.

5.8 Links to Council's Priorities

5.8.1 The Shop Front Grants will have direct and positive link to the following corporate priorities:

- Safe, liveable, locally focused communities
- Prosperous and healthy
- Sustainable growth and protected rurality

5.8.2 Additionally, implementation of the work funded through the grants will contribute directly to the attainment of the priorities of the Sustainable Community Strategy:

- Raise aspirations, education attainment and skill levels
- Develop healthier communities
- Improve access to services

The Contact Officer for this report is Becky Evans (719346).

Agenda Item No 9

Executive Board

17 July 2024

Report of the Chief Executive

**Local Government Association
Peer Review**

1 Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide information for Members on the forthcoming Peer Review.

Recommendation to the Board

- a That the report be noted; and**
- b That the Chief Executive be given delegated powers to confirm the arrangements for the Review.**

2 Report

- 2.1 Members will be aware from previous reports, the Council is due to have a Local Government Association (LGA) Peer Review this year. This was originally to have happened in June but had to be postponed due to the High Court hearing regarding the Kingsbury Oil Terminal.
- 2.2 The Review will now take place between Tuesday 10th and Thursday 12th September. Members are asked to note these dates as there will be workshops/discussions with Members during the Review.
- 2.3 Due to the recent elections, the final details are still being worked on and the draft information may be subject to change. For this reason, the detail is reported in the confidential section of this agenda but will be made public when confirmed.
- 2.4 The main information the Council needs to provide is a position statement and a draft of the statement is included in the confidential section for Members' comments.
- 2.5 Given there is not another meeting of this Board before the Review, it is suggested that the Chief Executive be given delegated to powers to confirm the final arrangements.

3 Report Implications

- 3.1 There are no specific implications and the Review will be resourced from within existing budgets. As mentioned in previous reports, the Review is timely given the Council is only one year into the current term, has a refreshed Corporate Plan, Medium Term Financial Strategy, has reviewed its Senior Management Structure and has an ambitious agenda as set out in the Budget earlier this year.

The Contact Officer for this report is Steve Maxey (719438).

Agenda Item No 10

Executive Board

17 July 2024

**Report of the
Chief Executive**

Exclusion of the Public and Press

Recommendation to the Board

To consider, in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, whether it is in the public interest that the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business, on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by Schedule 12A to the Act.

Agenda Item No 11

Local Government Association Peer Review – Report of the Chief Executive

Paragraph 1 – Information relating to an individual.

Agenda Item No 12

Housing Development – Report of the Chief Executive

Paragraph 1 - Information relating to an individual.

Agenda Item No 13

Exempt Extract of Minutes of the Executive Board held on 11 June 2024

Paragraph 1 – Information relating to an individual.

Paragraph 3 – Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person.

In relation to the item listed above members should only exclude the public if the public interest in doing so outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, giving their reasons as to why that is the case.

The Contact Officer for this report is Amanda Tonks (719221).