



Productivity Plan

2024

APPENDIX 1– West Lancashire Borough Council Productivity Plan

1. How have you transformed the way you design and delivery services to make better use of resources?

In recent years there has been a major strategic shift as the Council has transformed service redesign and delivery to utilise resources more effectively and to increase productivity.

The Council's new operating model aligns with our ambitions and focuses on an outcomes based approach to service redesign and delivery.

Our newly developed Council Plan 2023-2028 developed with our partners and communities highlight the strategic direction of West Lancashire Borough Council and enables us to work towards clearly defined strategic ambitions.

The Council has restructured and refocused resources to reflect our strategic shift, not only ensuring clarity of responsibility, centralisation of back-office services but creating significant efficiency savings.

Measuring productivity

The Council has a key set of Key performance Indicators (KPI`s) across all the service areas.

Alongside this, each service area has a set of KPI`s clearly aligned to our Council plan. This ensures a golden thread that runs through the organisation but also drives improvement in performance and productivity. Each year performance against the Council Plan is reviewed and reported to Council through our annual report.

The Council also compared productivity against other Local Authorities through quarterly performance reporting, benchmarking networks, peer review and commissioning service specific reviews to drive improvement.

Transformation of services

The Council has developed many programmes of work to improve services for local communities while driving economic growth. These have included Phase 1 of the Skelmersdale town centre plan comprising of the completion of the Tawd Valley retail centre, park improvements and rural business support initiatives.

West Lancashire has also improved local services with the delivery of 134 new Council homes for local people. The energy efficient homes have been developed by the Council's wholly owned development company Tawd Valley Developments (TVD), providing the Council with new homes to assist with properties lost through the right to buy scheme. We are currently working with the development company to develop a further 45 commercial units near Skelmersdale on Council-owned land. These will generate a long-term income stream for the Council.

Due to improved efficiencies in process, we can demonstrate clear tangible examples that illustrate productive service delivery that makes best use of services. For example

- Digital improvements to increase council housing rent collection
- The application of route optimisation in our waste services
- Use of `Service Now` to drive digital channel shift for customers

- Insourcing Revenues & Benefits bringing with it significant benefits not only around service continuity, but also enabling the Council to maintain full control over its critical functions.
- Centralising our procurement service to drive efficiencies, enabling the negotiation of better prices by consolidating purchasing power while driving social value. It has also enabled us to streamline procurement activities and promotes consistency creating more capacity in resources for this service.
- Centralising the Business Support Team to support high volume, transactional work benefits from economies of scale allowing efficient resource allocation and cost savings. In many areas this has removed single point of failure meaning skilled officers can step in to support and prevent costly impacts to service delays.

Partnership development

We also recognise that to maximise efficiencies we need to co-design services with our strategic partners. This can be evidenced through our leadership of the West Lancashire Health & Wellbeing Partnership, Community Safety Partnership, our Skelmersdale Ambassadors network and our delivery programme with the third sector which have created clear tangible outcomes to our communities .

Effective people management

The Council is now embarking on the next phase of 'Our People Strategy' having completed our last 3-year plan. Developed in partnership with staff our plan ensures that our workforce is equipped with the right skills to support the delivery of our Council plan.

Through the Our People Strategy we have developed our values and behaviour framework, a wellbeing strategy, a learning and development programme, a performance framework and an extensive online training package. In addition, we have evidenced improved productivity through streamlining processes and standardising procedures, enhancing improved efficiency by focusing on core tasks without fragmentation. The review of robust policies and procedures that are consistent, has improved decision-making and enabled smoother operations,

2. How do you plan to take advantage of technology and better use of data to improve decision making, service design and use of resources?

We recognise that there is the opportunity to use data more effectively to improve service level performance and outcomes so the Council is committed to revolutionising service delivery through digital innovation. This commitment is evident in our ambitious Transformation Portfolio for 2023–2028 and our strategic ICT roadmap.

Our approach is dynamic, evolving based on stakeholder feedback and performance monitoring. We aim to create data-driven solutions that align with our outlined requirements. Here are our key ambitions within the Transformation Portfolio:

Single Front Door:

- Our goal is to establish a unified digital access point for all customers, businesses, and visitors.
- Leveraging AI (Artificial Intelligence) and ML algorithms, we will identify patterns, predict trends, and provide actionable insights.

- Transparency and trust will be fostered through open data platforms, allowing customers to explore public data.

Integrated Digital Services:

- We will integrate and connect our organisational infrastructure, emphasising automation, workflow, and API (Application Programming Interface) integrations.
- This approach reduces costs, eliminates duplicity, and ensures data-driven decision-making based on a single version of the truth.
- Cloud-based platforms will facilitate scalable data storage and collaboration.

Citizen 360:

- A holistic view of each customer will span front and back-office operations.
- Effective data management policies and automated processes will align with information governance compliance.

Demand Tracking:

- A centralised data warehouse will integrate information from various sources, creating a unified and accessible repository.
- Key performance indicators and dashboards will monitor service effectiveness and resource efficiency.
- Real-time data-driven automation and resident feedback systems will enhance decision-making.

Automation and Service Improvement:

- AI and intelligent workflows will enhance existing services.
- Operational level agreements (OLAs) and service level agreements (SLAs) will ensure fitness for purpose.
- A robust change management program will embed digital principles within our service improvement lifecycle.

The Council recognises that technology and data play pivotal roles in enhancing decision-making, designing efficient services, and optimising resource utilisation. Our commitment to better outcomes for our customers drives our digital transformation journey development of these systems continues to be costly and complex while legacy system challenges remain a focus for improvement.

3. Your plans to reduce wasteful spend within your organisation and systems?

Our spending is carefully aligned to our annual budgets and Council plan priorities, and the Council has worked on reducing waste over many years. therefore, there is little that can be considered `wasteful spend'. We do however continually focus on stretching limited resources to achieve best value for our residents.

We continue to review our Council Estate and currently have underway an accommodation rationalisation project, this includes;

- Reviewing office requirements to reduce costs and generate capital receipts through land sales and development. The intention is to accommodate, significantly reduce building operating costs and continue hybrid working where appropriate.

- Completing a surplus land review exploring opportunities for capital receipts from land and property sales
- Completing an asset review and implementing the associated strategy.

Equality, diversity and inclusion form an important part of our organisational values, however this is embedded in all roles and work across the council, as a result there is no specific dedicated roles for equality, diversity and inclusion.

We will continue to identify opportunities for cost reduction, efficient resource utilisation, and financial savings, driving down agency and consultancy costs and increasing efficiency through our ICT strategy.

4. The barriers preventing progress that the government can help to reduce or remove?

The Council faces a complex landscape of challenges and opportunities as we strive to enhance productivity and continue to deliver efficient and cost-effective services to our residents.

There are a range of barriers that come into play.

- Significant financial challenges are clear barriers to progress with funding dramatically reduced over the last decade and a reduction in real terms spending power while demand for services continues to increase.
- Single year financial settlements hinder long-term and resource allocation. This has been a long-standing, well documented, issue for Council's. A longer-term settlement would give the Council the ability to plan more effectively over the medium term and to provide a clearer view on sustainability.
- Greater flexibility in the use of capital receipts would assist in facilitating transformation change and cost reduction.
- Legislative burdens and funding constraints, as a Council, we grapple with the introduction of new requirements without the complimentary funding to deliver. New burden funding exists but often fails to cover implementation costs, adding further pressure to our financial position at a time when revenue is under pressure. In addition many funding streams are time limited for example UK Shared Prosperity Fund so just when communities become reliant on a service this potentially has to be withdrawn or reduced.
- Removal of funding streams – these streams are key, but removal of funding such as New Homes Bonus again impacts our overall financial position. This places limits on our transformational service investments and replacement funding is necessary.
- Requests for additional work from central government that lacks the required funding cause further strain on already stretched resource. Balancing service demands with available capacity also remains a challenge for us.
- Changes and restrictions in Public Works Loan Board (PWL) lending rules limit the expansion opportunities for our development company, curtailing growth, and financial return.

- A further barrier is how data is shared effectively both across central government departments and between central and local government. When data is available, it is often duplicated or inconsistent and there could be real improvements in how data returns to central government could be improved
- Lancashire has not yet benefited from a devolution deal however any devolution deal needs to be ambitious and engage the whole of local government in Lancashire. It needs to be inclusive and aspirational so that Local Government in Lancashire can reach its full potential.