

Broxtowe Borough Council Productivity Plan

1. Introduction

1.1. The outgoing Government required every local authority to submit a Productivity Plan by 19 July 2024. These plans have to address the following issues:

- How the Council has transformed the way it designs and delivers services to make better use of resources.
- How the Council plans to take advantage of technology and make better use of data to improve decision-making, service design and use of resources.
- The Council's plans to reduce wasteful spend within its organisation and systems.
- The barriers preventing progress that the Government can help to reduce or remove.

2. What strategies does the Council have in place already that address these themes?

Digital Strategy

2.1. The Council's Digital Strategy (2022/24) has a vision "to enhance the customer experience, generate service insights by exploiting data, leverage the benefits of digital media, such as online video content and create a digital culture within the organisation". The strategy has six strategic objectives as follows:

- Website presentation: The customer experience
- Website presentation: Accessibility
- Digital engagement: Digital Media
- Digital Engagement: Channel shift/service redesign
- Enable a digital culture
- Service insights: Exploiting data/open data/big data.

2.2. The success of this approach can be evidenced through the following data:

- The Council is ranked consistently in the top five by Sitemorse, which ranks every Council's website in the country.
- The number of customer self-served online transactions including use of e-forms, payments by phone, automated phone payments (for Waste Services and gym bookings) and third party applications has increased from 447,999 in 2021/22 to 469,277 in 23/24 resulting in an approximate 20% reduction in calls to the Customer Contact Centre since 2019/20. There has also been an 80% reduction in face to face contact at reception in the Council Offices when compared with prior to 2020 (40153 in 2019/20 to 7683 in 2023/24), and a 70% reduction in Customer Contact Centre face to face enquiries over the same period (2928 in 2019/20 to 861 in 2023/24).

- In 2023/24 there were 60,473 online cash payment transactions 90% of over 22,000 customers are paying for the garden waste collection service via self-service options. The “when is my bin collected” service is fully digital and now reaches more than 100% more customers than the previous telephony only service.
- There are currently 2,900 residents signed up to the Council’s award-winning online Green Rewards platform. Since the launch of platform, Nottinghamshire residents have collectively avoided emitting over 1,000 tonnes of CO2 (that would be enough gas to fill 1,000 hot air balloons).
- The Council has over 30,000 subscribers to its “email me” facility updating residents on matters of interest to them, and the Council’s facebook and twitter accounts had a social media reach in 2023/24 of 1,208,300.

ICT Strategy

2.3. The Council’s ICT strategy (2022-27) has four strategic themes which are:

- Enabling efficiency
- Responding flexibly and with agility to customer needs
- Modern architecture supporting a sustainable, efficient and agile working culture
- Robust arrangements for business continuity, information management and governance and security.

2.4. The success of this approach can be evidenced through the following data:

- A combination of investment in predictive analytic software, and additional staffing in the form of financial inclusion officers to support tenants maintain their tenancies resulted in Broxtowe bucking the national trend of rent arrears, with a rent collection performance continuously improving year on year (100.2% in 2023/24 with percentage of tenant arrears reduced to 0.9%) and no evictions.
- The Council centralised all its administrative capability into a Business Support Unit to provide greater resilience and expertise in improving and transforming business processes, for example introducing an automatic invoice matching system, eliminating waste and duplication, and leveraging the benefit of existing software such as the system that underpins the operation of the Council’s Licensing system.
- Agile working was introduced throughout the Council enabling officers to work when and where it is most beneficial to do so from the point of view of the customer. Whilst providing access to service for customers through all access channels for all services including face to face service during all opening hours five days a week, the Council has been able to reduce its office footprint, dispose of surplus assets, let space within its existing offices to the voluntary sector, and co-locate its services with key partners the Police and the Citizens Advice Bureau.

3. Service cost and quality

3.1. An analysis of service cost and quality on the LG inform website highlights that Broxtowe is an authority that delivers its services at low cost and with generally high quality. The Council is continuing to innovate and deliver improved services to residents. Examples include:

- Purchasing and redeveloping part of Beeston Town Centre – a successful local authority led intervention helping to diversify our main sub regional town centre now generating £900,000 a year revenue to the Council.
<https://www.atkinsrealis.com/en/projects/the-square-beeston-town-centre-regeneration>
- A transition to Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) for the Council's fleet is now complete, delivering carbon savings annually of 777.5 tonnes (which is more weight than 194 Asian Elephants).
- Delivery of a [Pride in Parks](#) programme highlighting partnership working and work with town and parish Councils which amplified our investment of £782,000 to attract £618,000 of additional capital to improve parks and open spaces.
- Successful attraction of Stapleford Towns fund resource of £21.1m and £16.5m Kimberley Levelling up funding. These funds were used to attract additional external investment some of which included over £280,000 matched funding from town centre businesses to amplify the Towns Fund investment of £1m for over 70 town centre business in Stapleford.
- A new contract with a local funeral director is expected to increase usage of the Bramcote service by 10.5%. The introduction of a pre-paid cremation deed will also increase the number of funerals and relieve the burden of funeral debt for bereaved families. Operational improvements have resulted in a 13% gas saving.

The Council had an [LGA Peer Review in 2022](#) and received positive feedback about our financial management and service delivery. Four areas considered capable of further improvement are set out below.

Issue	Our Improvement Response
1. Housing repairs and asset management	Set up Housing Improvement Board – two project plans being delivered and progress reported to Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
2. Raising levels of recycling and composting	Planned Implementation of food waste kerbside collection and activity of newly employed environment officer to reduce contamination rates and increase uptake of recycling.
3. Consistently achieving high performance in processing of planning applications	Task force to be set up to improve consistency.

Issue	Our Improvement Response
4. Reducing the cost of servicing debt	Successful delivery of our Treasury Management.

4. Business Strategy

4.1. The Council has a [Medium Term Budget Strategy and a Business Strategy](#) that is designed to ensure that it will be:

- Lean and fit in its assets, systems and processes;
- Customer focused in all its activities;
- Commercially-minded and financially viable; and
- Making best use of technology.

The Council's current Business Strategy sets out projects which will either generate income or reduce costs amounting to a net value of £1,040,000.

Successes in the current year have included:

- The Council has been able to buck the national trend and reduce its budget for managing homelessness by £65,000 in 2024/25 due to steps it has taken to work with private landlords, manage its own stock efficiently and create more Council owned temporary accommodation.
- Through investing in skills to deliver homes (employing a housebuilding delivery manager and two apprentices), the Council is delivering a significant pipeline of housebuilding which last year enabled the addition of more houses to the Council's stock than lost through right to buy.
- Through setting up a Teckal company, LLeisure Ltd, to manage the leisure service, the Council has reduced its management fee requirement from £1m to £369,000 over some years. In the current year there was a reduction in cost to the general fund of £150,000 over the previous year.

5. The Productivity gap

The Council has considered what the current productivity gap may be in the light of existing activity. There has been a decision to frame productivity ambitions around the themes of People, Performance, Partnerships and Procurement.

Area of Focus	Intervention	Measuring the productivity improvement
1. Investing in our people	Produce a new People Strategy under the themes of: (a) Training and development (b) Equality and diversity (we don't spend on equality and diversity consultants, but consider diversity to be contributor not a detractor to a high functioning organisation) (c) Wellbeing (d) Organisational Development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced absence rates • Improved annual employee survey results • Investment in skills • Number of apprentices employed • Reduced turnover rates

Area of Focus	Intervention	Measuring the productivity improvement
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced spend on consultants to cover skill gaps • Reduced agency spend
2. Improving performance	Delivery of the ambitions set out in the table in paragraph 3.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher annual Tenant Satisfaction Measure (TSM) results • Measureable improvement in asset performance • Consistently high levels of planning processing performance • Higher recycling and composting rates • Lower contamination rates
3. Productive partnerships	<p>Creating new Partnerships and leveraging the benefit of existing partnerships to create additional public value:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review voluntary sector collaboration to build on existing success e.g. https://citizensadvicebroxtowe.org.uk/3954-2/ • Extend our work to support people experiencing severe and multiple disadvantage • Leverage collaborative advantage through joint working with public sector partners • Working in partnership with the new East Midlands County Combined Authority. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of new partnerships leading to additional public value • Amount of additional resource generated from partnerships aligned to the Council's Corporate Plan objectives.
4. Procurement Advantage	Review the Council's procurement activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve contract management to secure better outcomes

Area of Focus	Intervention	Measuring the productivity improvement
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce cost and or improve the quality of services • Increase social value.

6. Barriers

6.1 Some barriers encountered:

- Single-year finance settlements inhibit the effective planning and deployment of resources.
- There would be a benefit from much greater flexibility for the Council to decide how to raise and spend money locally. Central prescription and ring-fencing constrain the Authority's ability to allocate resources effectively. The number of specific, formula-based revenue grants and their separate reporting requirements are unnecessarily complex. It would be much simpler and more efficient to roll all specific grants into a single provision in the Local Government Finance Settlement.
- The wide range of separate one-off revenue and capital grant pots with onerous, costly and counter-productive bidding processes promoted with too little notice requiring employment of additional capacity to produce bids and potentially wasted effort and resources.
- Complicated, inconsistent, and misaligned processes for submitting data returns to central government.
- Lack of join-up between central government departments on issues including planning policy housing, homelessness prevention and asylum dispersal.
- Numerous statutory requirements to place notices in newspapers or issue written copies of routine notices.
- The introduction of approved inspectors for building regulation which undermines the viability of building control, makes enforcement difficult and decreases transparency and accountability.
- Huge amounts of wasted money caused by sudden cancellation of long term government goals – e.g. HS2 Eastern leg extension.