

Slough Borough Council

Report To:	Cabinet
Date:	15 th July 2024
Subject:	Productivity Plan
Lead Member:	Cllr Dexter Smith – Leader
Chief Officer:	Will Tuckley – Chief Executive Annabel Scholes – Section 151 Officer
Contact Officer:	Director of Strategy, Change, and Resident Engagement
Ward(s):	All
Key Decision:	No
Exempt:	No
Decision Subject to Call In:	No
Appendices:	Appendix A – Productivity Plan Appendix B – Letter from DLUHC to CEO

1. Summary and Recommendations

- 1.1. On 16th April 2024, the council CEO received a letter from the Minister for Local Government requesting that a new Productivity Plan was written and published by 19th July 2024.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is recommended to:

- Adopt the Productivity Plan in response to the request from the Minister for Local Government.

Options

- Adopt the Productivity Plan and publish as per the mandated deadline of 17th July. **(Recommended)**
- Adopt an alternative plan. **This is not recommended** as the plan has been reviewed informally by scrutiny members, DLUHC commissioners and key officers, who are supportive of the plan.

Commissioner Review

The commissioners are content with this report.

2. Report

2.1. ***Request from DLUHC***

2.2. On 16th April 2024, the council CEO received a letter from the Minister for Local Government requiring submission of a new Productivity Plan by 19th July 2024.

2.3. The plans were requested to include response to four strategic questions:

- How have you transformed the way you design and deliver services to make better use of resources?
- How you plan to take advantage of technology and make better use of data to improve decision making, service design and use of resources?
- Your plans to reduce wasteful spend within your organisation and systems?
- The barriers preventing progress that the Government can help to reduce or remove?

2.4. Member oversight and endorsement of the Productivity Plan is expected before publication.

2.5. Once received, DLUHC will review common themes and issues across the sector. A panel will be established to look at common themes and issues that arise from the plans submitted from Local Authorities. This panel will advise national and local government on next steps.

2.6. ***Slough Borough Council Productivity Plan***

2.7. *Response to Q1 - How have you transformed the way you design and deliver services to make better use of resources?*

2.8. This section sets out the council's intervention and improvement journey since the section 114 was issued in 2021.

2.9. The section covers:

- The Doing Right by Slough Improvement & Recovery Plan
- Adopting a new Corporate Plan
- Adopting the Phase 2 Recovery programme (2024-2026)
- The importance of ensuring improvement against all Directions, including those focused on children's services and SEND.
- The council and children's company's belief in early intervention.
- The formation of the new Berkshire Prosperity Board.

2.10. *Response to Q2 - How you plan to take advantage of technology and make better use of data to improve decision making, service design and use of resources?*

2.11. This section sets out the council's adoption of, and views on further adoption of, technology and service design to improve productivity.

2.12. This section covers:

- The importance of maintaining a focus on the stability and access to core infrastructure and systems. This is a foundation for adopting new processes and tools.
- Examples of new technology adopted since 2021: process automation in revenues and benefits, assistive technology in adult social care, a chatbot on the council's website.
- A recognition that a new data platform, data management team, and data strategy are required to make better use of data for improving productivity.
- Examples of developing insights to improve evidence-based decision making: the Slough Insights Pack, data sharing with partners, place-based data through the Public Sector Geo-Spatial Agreement.

2.13. *Response to Q3 - Your plans to reduce wasteful spend within your organisation and systems?*

2.14. This section sets out key points relating to the council's performance management framework and new Target Operating Model project.

2.15. This section covers:

- The council's Corporate Performance Report, which is reviewed monthly by CLT and quarterly by Cabinet. It is made available to Commissioners monthly.
- The council's Target Operating Model project, which started in February 2024, and received formal approval to launch in April 2024.
- The forward plan for the Target Operating Model project, and the impact on the planning for the Medium-Term Financial Strategy and 2025/26 Budget.

2.16. *Response to Q4 - The barriers preventing progress that the Government can help to reduce or remove?*

2.17. This section sets out the council's view on key barriers to improving productivity, and a set of clear asks from the council to national Government.

2.18. This section includes the following asks of national Government:

- A long-term approach to funding, with an adequate scale of funding, would enable efficient planning and delivery of adult social care and children's social care.
- A long-term national strategy for reducing demand pressures or creating greater stability in Special Educational Needs and Disabilities services and Housing services.
- The future model of devolution and the process for agreeing a devolution deal with central government. This would enable the Berkshire Prosperity Board (see Section 1) to plan more effectively for the future and could

support the Berkshire authorities to identify suitable opportunities for sharing services and attracting investment to meet local needs.

- A continuation of advice and funding support to enable technological transformation and robust cyber security.
- Policy on, and guidance to inform, models of community asset ownership to enable the provision of modern and sustainable sports and leisure facilities.

2.19. Next steps

2.20. The council is obligated to publish the Productivity Plan for 19th July.

2.21. The council will then monitor progress on how productive it is through its Performance Management Framework and the Quarterly Recovery and Performance Update reports to Cabinet.

3. Implications of the Recommendation

3.1. Financial implications

3.1.1. DLUHC's request for a council productivity plan was a universal request of all local authorities in England. The Council's response is a reflection of all of the different measures taken to improve service delivery and achieve financial sustainability. These actions continue to be reflected in the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.

3.1.2. Improved productivity is central to the deliverability of the council's Medium Term Financial Strategy, new Target Operating Model, and balanced budgets.

3.2. Legal implications

3.2.1. The Local Government Finance Settlement for 2024/25 referenced Government efforts to return the sector to sustainability in the future. Local authorities are required to develop and share productivity plans setting out how service performance will be improved, and wasteful expenditure reduced. Future funding settlements will be informed by performance against these plans.

3.3. Risk management implications

3.3.1. None identified.

3.4. Environmental implications

3.4.1. None identified.

3.5. Equality implications

3.5.1. None identified.

4. Background Papers

None