

Cheltenham Borough Council Productivity Plan 2024/25

This document has been prepared in response to the requirement set out in the 2024/25 Local Government Finance Settlement to prepare and publish a productivity plan by 19 July 2024, outlining how the Council's activities address three categories set out in the settlement.

Government Requirement	How our Budget and Corporate Plan align	How Success will be measured
Transformation of services to make better use of resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Winding up of our Arm's Length Management Organisation Cheltenham Borough Homes to transition the housing management service in-house. • Sale of the Council's Municipal Offices to deliver a capital receipt and initiate the re-location of the Council to more fit for purpose accommodation. • Marketing of the Council's shareholding in Gloucestershire Airport Limited to bring new investment for local business, taxpayers and the wider economy. • The implementation of a refreshed asset management strategy to rationalise the Council's portfolio, deliver regeneration activity and provide capital resources for investment or to repay borrowing. • The approval of the conditions for a Financial Development Agreement for the Golden Valley development to deliver the National Cyber Innovation Centre and 3,700 affordable homes. • Expand Cheltenham's cyber eco-system and increase footfall to the high street through the launch of the Minster Exchange with private sector partners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revenue budget saving for the Housing Revenue Account and the General Fund • Strong future stewardship for the Municipal Office building • Strengthening of the capital receipts reserve • More affordable housing delivered in the town. • Growth in Council Tax and Business Rates.
Opportunities to take advantage of advances in technology and make better use of data to inform decision making and service design.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a new digital platform to make it easier for our customers to interact with the council 24/7 and 365 days a year. This will free up more time to help those customers most in need. • Development of an in-cab technology for the waste and recycling vehicle fleet. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of digital transactions • Number of new applications launched for customer use

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investment in a team of data analysts to develop new solutions to the customer service journey and process. 	
Ways to reduce wasteful spend within systems, including specific consideration of expenditure on consultants and discredited staff Equality, Diversity and Inclusion programmes – this does not include programmes designed to promote integration and civic pride, and counter extremism.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure value for money for the taxpayer by identifying commercial opportunities to increase our net income. Develop a car parking strategy that will bring real change in how we travel, how we help our communities and our financial sustainability, as the supply and provision of acceptable, accessible and good quality car parking is important to visitors, residents and businesses. Investment in directly employed construction and commercial project managers to manage the deliver of key programmes and reduce the Council's reliance on external consultants. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resident satisfaction with Cheltenham as a place to live Balanced budget Savings made through process improvements Social, environmental and financial return on investments

Barriers preventing activity that Government can help to reduce or remove

Cheltenham Borough Council is in its most transformative period in the last 15 years. In the past twelve months the administration has taken significant decisions which will change the way in which the Council delivers services in order to continue to deliver on the key priorities set out in the 2023-27 Corporate Plan. Although these decisions will have a hugely positive impact on the future of the Council, their implementation will take time to deliver in a measured and structured way.

The most significant barrier to delivering the controlled change is the is single-year finance settlements. Without a clear indication about funding for multiple years, we cannot effectively plan and manage our balances and reserves to ensure decisions can continue to be made in relation to our core services such as planning, environmental health and safeguarding.

We have also been hampered by the tendency of Whitehall to design and decide policy that affects councils without engaging the sector as fully and as early as it could. This has resulted in initiatives and funds that are more complicated than necessary and that are difficult and, in some cases costly, for councils to implement. We strongly support much closer policy co-design between central government and local councils.

We would also benefit from much greater flexibility for our council (and all councils) to decide how to raise and spend money locally. Central prescription and ringfencing constrain our ability to allocate our resources effectively.

We incur unnecessary spending and waste valuable officer time complying with rules, requirements, restrictions and processes imposed by central government and regulators. These include:

- 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.
- The wide range of separate one-off revenue and capital grant pots with onerous, costly and counter-productive bidding processes.
- Complicated, inconsistent, and misaligned processes for submitting data returns to central government.
- Lack of join-up between central government departments on issues including housing, homelessness prevention and asylum dispersal.
- Numerous statutory requirements to place notices in newspapers or issue written copies of routine notices.
- Excessive amount of information that is required in annual accounts or has to be published under the transparency code.
- Statutory overrides such as the requirement to value assets for accounts every year.
- Regulatory bodies seeking “to the letter” compliance with their statutory codes.