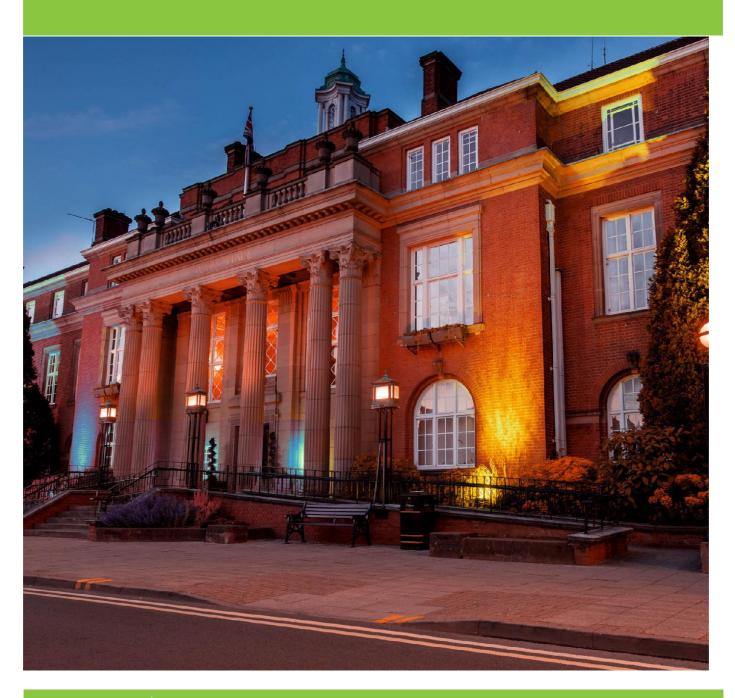# Productivity in Local Government 2024
Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council

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

How has the organisation changed in recent years to become more productive?

Previous and current actions
In 2021, there was a senior management restructure, creating one Chief Executive Officer and five Director posts, from two Executive Directors and five Directors. Services were re-aligned under the Directors with synergies to give greater resilience at that time.

In 2023, a further senior management restructure was undertaken, with external review from West Midlands Employers, who recommended creating nine Assistant Director posts, reporting into four Strategic Directors, giving greater robustness, resilience, and oversight. Each Assistant Director has been tasked with reviewing their respective service areas, reviewing functions, operating costs and staffing base. The cost of the revised structures were seen to be cost neutral (covering the cost of the new Assistant Director posts) or deliver cost savings where possible. Further work has been undertaken with Spend to Save budgets, and that there is oversight and a fair process for resource allocation and prioritisation.

Further actions
Further service reviews will be undertaken over the coming 12 to 18 months, under a Transformation/Service Improvement process, reducing the overall staffing base, but increasing resilience and performance, utilising technology, and robust processes.

How do you measure productivity in your organisation?

Previous and current actions
The Council has what it calls an Integrated Performance Report which periodically reviews Council performance against measures and targets. Whilst it does not focus purely on productivity, it does however indicate Council performance against key measures.

Further actions
The Integrated Performance Report and performance measures are being reviewed during 2024/2025 with a view of having a new set of corporate performance measures from April 2025 at the latest.

What changes have you made to improve services, what effects have those had?

Previous and current actions
In 2022/23, The authority Implemented a Transformation Delivery Group, a Programme Management Process and undertook a Peer Challenge Corporate Review in 2021. These have delivered significant improvement to the authority, reducing costs and challenging behaviour and processes to modernise and increase resilience.

Housing has commissioned Campbell Tickell as a repairs consultant to carry out a fundamental review of the service to increase productivity across the inhouse DLO.

What are your current plans for transformation over the next two years and how will your measure the effects of those changes?

Previous and current actions
In 2022, a Transformation Working Group was established, with staff from key departments reviewing some processes to reduce costs and create greater efficiencies. As a result of this work, a decision was made to invest in this area, to create further efficiencies by creating a Transformation Team. Phase 1 of this plan was to review internal and existing processes within local teams, with local

Transformation "champions." This proved extremely useful for the organisation and led to several larger reviews, greatly improving processes.

Further actions
Phase 2 of this will be to create a bespoke Transformation Team, that will assist services/departments with internal transformation processes.

The team will review processes, systems, and staffing structures with objectivity and make recommendations on improvements for service users and the authority. This will be under a continuous improvement methodology.

Overall impact will be measured, in terms of customer impact (customer contact, complaints, etc.) operating cost, productivity of services and performance indicators.

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

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?

Previous and current actions
Historically, data collection has been undertaken manually, with limited systems and automation. Due to this, data quality has not been "live" and has been reported historically, after the event, meaning that any changes/improvements are slow to implement, and nearly always reactive.
Data is made available to residents via FOI/SAR/EIR and through Cabinet/Council reports, media outlets, website etc.

Further actions
Through modest investment and implementing up to date systems and software in 2024/25, data will be available as a live update, with greater ability to interrogate data, scrutinise data and provide real-time performance over a large cross-section of the authority. This will enable dynamic decision making and provide a greater impact to our service users and reporting to statutory bodies.

Furthermore, upgrades to our website and infrastructure mean that we will be providing further information via a publication scheme, allowing for greater data to be available via our website, reducing FOI/SAR/EIR etc.

The Housing Landlord Service is currently undertaking a Data Maturity Assessment to identify strengths and weaknesses and to identify priority areas for improvement.

Are there any particular barriers from legacy systems?

Previous and current actions
As with many local authorities, there are many historical and legacy systems which required upgrading to the latest technology. This is often costly and requires investment from staff, as well as expertise to implement successfully. Many of these systems are stand-alone and do not integrate with other systems, resulting in many manual tasks and long processes.

Further actions
Moving forward, we are reviewing systems within the authority as there is a need to modernise with the times. The overall aim is. investing in newer, modern and fit for purpose technology. Our current procurements include a new Planning System, Finance System, Payment System and Revenue and Benefits System. This will greatly improve our operations and reduce manual processes and could result in requiring a lower staffing base, creating greater efficiency, resilience and robustness for the future.

How often do you share data with other organisations, and do you find this useful?

Previous and current actions
As an authority, we utilise various external agencies to benchmark data. One such example of this is The Housing Landlord Service is a member of Housemark, allowing it to benchmark its performance with social landlords identified as 'nearest neighbour' and against the national picture. This has allowed the service to further understand where it is performing well and where additional focus on performance is required.

We also use LG Futures, CIPFA and LINK around our financial performance to ensure that we have sound financial controls and market-based indicators to make informed decisions. We are constantly engaging with the LGA, to benchmark and sense check data from across the authority, as well as to link in with our neighbours and stay informed.

Further actions
We are going to continue to work with benchmark agencies across the sector to measure our current performance, but also engage with internal audit, business performance and LGA to understand the regional and national picture. We want to utilise this data to enhance our services, for the customer/service user.

Are there opportunities to use new technology to improve workflows and systems, such as predictive analytics and AI?

Previous and current actions
Previously, technology has been procured in isolation by services/departments, without a greater understanding of the implications across the authority. This has caused some issues with workflows and other systems, meaning many processes have been manual and lengthy, often at detriment of quality and resilience. There have been many single points of failure.

Future actions
We are implementing Power BI for greater analytical abilities, as well as integrating this with many of our internal systems. The new Transformation Team will be reviewing workflows and systems, along with Audit, to ensure they are fit for purpose. We are also investigating AI systems, particularly focussing on Customer Services and self-service for our customers, to improve the customer experience and bring greater benefits.

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

How do you approach identifying and reducing waste in the organisation? How do you monitor progress?

Previous and current actions
In the past, the authority has undertaken several lean reviews across the services to reduce waste, in some cases review staffing structures to reduce overall costs and improve the business. These have often been in isolation across the authority, which has meant that sharing of best practice has not always been possible, as well as the quality of the lean reviews, as these have in many cases been led by the respective department themselves.

With recent changes to the management structure, as well as having a more centralised view, it has been possible to do staffing reviews and restructures in a much more robust and effective way. Furthermore, the authority has adopted an Enterprise Strategy, which looks to developing income and reducing waste within services.

Further actions
Moving forward, the authority is aiming to commercialise as much as possible, not only with increasing existing and established income

streams, but also to capture further income from new income generating possibilities, under an enhanced Enterprise/Commercialisation Strategy.

The idea here is that the authority adopts a business-view where possible, and where this enhances service delivery, or makes way for different ways of generating income.

Where have you followed invest to save and what was the result?

Previous and current actions
As an authority we are reviewing our existing and legacy systems, to modernise and digitise/automate as many manual processes as possible. An example of updating systems is the procurement of a new Planning Software to reduce admin time for planners, increased production, selling services to other LPAs.

Future actions
The authority will continue to review systems and software to capture further efficiencies, but also provide data, business analytics and enhancements under the invest to save methodology.

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?

Previous and current actions
We do not have any EDI Champions within the organisation. We log the time and money of EDI related activity as we do have an Equalities Officer within the authority, who carries out training and impact assessments. Training feedback is sought and reviewed by

managers to improve the quality of training.

Future actions
Looking to the future, the EDI functions and networks will be reviewed, and consideration of EDI Champions will also be reviewed to ensure there is a deliverable benefit to this.

What percentage of total staff budget is spent on a) agency and b) consultants? How do you assess value for money on agency and 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?

Previous and current actions
Currently, we spend 3.51% of the staffing budget on agency staffing and 1.61% on consultancy costs. Value for money is measured against the project/staffing outputs (JD for agency staffing and Business Case for Consultants) and is regularly reviewed by the relevant Service Manager/Assistant Director, as well as Finance, Transformation and HR. Of these agency/consultants approximately 70% have been in place for over a year, this is due to several reasons, including service reviews, staff sickness, permanent staffing recruitment freeze and ongoing projects.

Future actions
Moving forward, agency and consultancy spend will be reviewed as part of a new Corporate Review Board, mapping spend against functions, particularly relevant for Transformation and changes to culture.

What governance structures do you use to ensure accountability of spend?

Previous and current actions
Quarterly budget reporting to Cabinet as well as quarterly integrated performance reports submitted to the appropriate OSP where

questions can be asked to the officer and further analysis/breakdown can be provided on request.

Do you share office functions with other councils and if so, how useful do you find this?

Previous and current actions
Currently within the authority we have shared functions/teams for Procurement, Elections, Revenues and Benefits, and Insurance Services. We also have a shared recycling service, and shared operating agreement for the local MRF. This provides additional revenue, pooling expertise and knowledge and sharing of best practice across the region.

If you have one, what is your assessment and experience of working with an elected mayor, combined authority, or devolution deal?

Previous and current actions
Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council is a non-constituent member of the West Midlands Combined Authority and was one of the first borough/district Councils to join. This gives beneficial experience in being closer to the issue and responding in a meaningful way. This is particularly relevant to local Regeneration monies etc.

The barriers preventing progress that the Government can help to reduce or remove

What are the barriers preventing you from improving productivity further within your organisation?

Previous and current actions
Many of our internal barriers are around capacity, culture (change in progress), financial resources and specialist expertise.
Like many others we are a business albeit with social values. (Culture).

Future actions
Moving forward we are looking to overcome these barriers, but this will take time, particularly regarding culture, as well as financial resources. Additional financial resilience through Enterprise/Commercialisation is key, as well as additional available funding streams and opportunities from Government Departments.

What are the barriers preventing you from improving services further?

Previous and current actions
Echoing themes above, capacity, culture (in progress), financial resources and specialist expertise.

Are these barriers consistent across multiple services?

Previous and current actions
In general, yes, these barriers are consistent across services. There is work being undertaken across the authority to change this, not only at a corporate level but also at a service level. One such service is adopting further invest to save working, career graded structure, virtual full complement of staff, more performance agreements etc.

Future actions
Moving forward, this will be enhanced with different ways of working, more consistency in management and leadership decision, data informed decisions from systems and enhanced training as well as performance targets and individual/team collaboration and ownership.

What would you need to remove those barriers? What do you need from government, the market or elsewhere?

Previous and current actions
Additional financial resources are fundamental to remove many of the barriers that we face. Not only to allow us to invest in appropriate staffing and be competitive with pay, but also offer enhanced training and new ways of working through market leading and robust systems and software.

Future actions
In the future, local authorities need to be able to lead sectors, and not fall behind due to funding restrictions, and reducing services for customers/residents.