

PRODUCTIVITY PLAN

Head of Service:	Jackie King, Chief Executive
Report Author	Emma Hill
Wards affected:	(All Wards);
Appendices (attached):	Productivity Plan 2024 – 2028

Summary

This report accompanies the council's first 'Productivity Plan', publication of which is a new requirement introduced by Government as part of their review of productivity across all public services and Local Government.

Recommendation (s)

The Committee is asked to:

- (1) Endorse the appended Productivity Plan for submission to Government.**

1 Reason for Recommendation

- 1.1 The Minister for Local Government wrote to all Local Authority Chief Executives in April 2024, announcing a new requirement to produce a 'Productivity Plan' and submit to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC) by 19 July 2024.
- 1.2 Productivity plans will be reviewed by Government to enable their consideration of "*what is already working well across the whole country, what the common themes are, whether there are any gaps and what more (Government) need to do to unlock future opportunities*". This offers a valuable opportunity to set out for central Government, some of the barriers that the council experiences in working towards greater efficiency and productivity.
- 1.3 DLUHC have confirmed that councils will have flexibility in how they decide to approve their plan, provided there is member oversight and endorsement. Hence approval by Full Council is not a requirement.
- 1.4 Due to the exceptionally high volume of committee work items at this time of year and the impact of the election on the council's decision clearing process, it has not been possible to get the Productivity Plan to a committee ahead of 19 July 2024.

Audit and Scrutiny Committee

25 July 2024

- 1.5 Special dispensation has been received from DLUHC allowing an extension of time so that the plan can be considered by this committee, and debated in open forum. However, DLUHC expect the plan to be submitted no later than 31 July 2024.

2 Background

- 2.1 Local authorities are required to produce and submit to DLUHC a Productivity Plan, detailing ways to 'improve service performance and reduce wasteful expenditure' by 19 July 2024.
- 2.2 The plans will be reviewed by an expert panel, to be established by DLUHC, which will include the Office for Local Government (OFLOG) and the Local Government Association (LGA).
- 2.3 Productivity is broadly defined as a measure of performance that compares the output of a product with the input, or resources required to produce it. As such, Epsom & Ewell Borough Council (EEBC) measures organisational performance and productivity through analysis of a comprehensive suite of key performance indicators, which both reflect our statutory duties and the priorities of our residents.
- 2.4 While the civil service and other public services adhere to tightly proscribed definitions and measures of productivity, there is no single definition and measure of productivity in Local Government. Councils are therefore free to describe their own definition. The reference to existing KPIs, set out in 2.3 above, is consistent with the approach other Surrey districts and boroughs have taken to defining and measuring productivity.
- 2.5 The plan's scope encompasses all council activity, including the HRA, where an authority has one. DLUHC has encouraged authorities to take a wide view of productivity and the plans are expected to cover productivity in relation to:
 - 2.5.1 How the organisation is run.
 - 2.5.2 Service delivery.
 - 2.5.3 Place leadership.
- 2.6 DLUHC also expects the plans to cover four main areas, and in their instruction letter to Chief Executives, provided 21 'prompting' questions:
 - 2.6.1 Theme 1 - Transformation of services to make better use of resources.
 - 2.6.2 Theme 2 – Opportunities to take advantage of advances in technology and make better use of data to inform decision making and service design.

Audit and Scrutiny Committee

25 July 2024

- 2.6.3 Theme 3 - Ways to reduce wasteful spend within systems, including specific consideration of expenditure on consultants and discredited staff Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) programmes.
- 2.6.4 Theme 4 - Barriers preventing activity that Government can help to reduce or remove.
- 2.7 Individual productivity plans will not be rated, or scored and should draw on existing work. Plans are expected to be succinct.
- 2.8 Councillors will notice that the Productivity Plan cross-references the Medium-Term Financial Plan, the Annual Plan, and the Efficiency Plan as these documents all set out Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that have previously been approved by Councillors and as such form the basis for the council's current plans to improve productivity. KPIs within internal Service Delivery Plans supplement the above delivery and monitoring mechanism.
- 2.9 The appended Productivity Plan has been formulated following consultation with each Head of Service to capture their input against the themes and prompting questions supplied by DLUHC.
- 2.10 The council's Senior Leadership Team have also contributed their insight to the plan development process alongside pulling through some of the relevant suggestions made by the LGA peer team following the recent Corporate Peer Challenge, for example in referencing development of a Corporate Transformation Programme.
- 2.11 The Plan has also taken into consideration the advice of the District Council Network (DCN) to all Local Authority Chief Executives.
- 2.12 It is understood that Government will convene a panel of experts to review the submitted plans, and that further guidance on the structure and application of productivity plans will follow this review. In the absence of any prescriptive regime at present, it is suggested that the productivity plan is reviewed annually, alongside the Annual Plan and Medium-Term Financial Plan review cycle, unless or until further guidance is issued by DLUHC.

3 Risk Assessment

Legal or other duties

3.1 Equality Impact Assessment

- 3.1.1 The letter from DLUHC included reference to the council's work in training it's staff in Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) under the theme of plans to 'reduce wasteful spend'.

Audit and Scrutiny Committee

25 July 2024

3.1.2 Whilst the council has reported a nil return for expenditure on the EDI 'Equality Champions' model within the plan, the council believes that fulfilling the public sector equality duty is vital in order to reflect and support the diverse communities that we serve. To this end, the council has an established Equality Impact Assessment regime and a network of staff who support compliance through a staff 'DEI' group.

3.2 Crime & Disorder

3.2.1 There are no crime and disorder issues arising as a result of this report.

3.3 Safeguarding

3.3.1 There are no specific safeguarding issues arising as a result of this report.

3.4 Dependencies

3.4.1 To comply with the directive from DLUHC, the Productivity Plan will need to be submitted no later than 31 July 2024.

3.5 Other

3.5.1 None that are applicable.

4 Financial Implications

4.1 None arising from the contents of this report.

4.2 **Section 151 Officer's comments:** None arising from the contents of this report.

5 Legal Implications

5.1 None other than as outlined in this report

5.2 **Legal Officer's comments: None arising from the contents of this report**

6 Policies, Plans & Partnerships

6.1 **Council's Key Priorities:** The following Key Priorities are engaged:

- Effective Council.

6.2 **Service Plans:** The matter **is not** included within the current Service Delivery Plan. This was a new requirement introduced by Government in April 2024.

Audit and Scrutiny Committee

25 July 2024

6.3 **Climate & Environmental Impact of recommendations:** None arising from the contents of this report.

6.4 **Sustainability Policy & Community Safety Implications:** No issues arising from the contents of this report.

6.5 **Partnerships:** No issues arising as a consequence of this report.

7 Background papers

7.1 The documents referred to in compiling this report are as follows:

Previous reports:

- None.

Other papers:

- None that are applicable, this is a newly introduced requirement from Government.