

# Guildford Borough Council

Report to: Executive

Date: Monday, 15 July 2024

Ward(s) affected: All

Report of Director: Transformation & Governance

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Report Status: Open

## Productivity Plan

### 1. Executive Summary

This report sets out Guildford Borough Council's productivity plan, compiled following a request from the government to do so as part of the 2024/25 Local Government Finance Settlement. The productivity plan – available at appendix 1 – summarises recent steps taken to improve productivity and service performance, as well as the anticipated next steps.

### 2. Recommendation to Executive

That the Executive:

1. Notes the council's productivity plan available at annex 1; and
2. Endorses the plan ahead of its submission to the Department for Levelling Up, Communities and Housing by 19 July 2024.

### 3. Reason(s) for Recommendation:

To comply with a request from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) to compile a productivity plan.

#### **4. Exemption from publication**

No part of this report is exempt from publication.

#### **5. Purpose of Report**

To seek the Executive's endorsement of the council's productivity plan ahead of the 19 July deadline for submission to DLUHC.

#### **6. Strategic Priorities**

Improving service performance and productivity underpins the council's strategic priorities. To that end, the draft corporate strategy includes a proposed specific priority on Guildford being a 'resilient and well-run council'.

#### **7. Background**

- 7.1. The final Local Government Finance Settlement was laid before Parliament in February 2024. In the ministerial statement setting out the settlement, the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities advised that, as part of a package of additional funding, the government would be asking local authorities to compile productivity plans, setting out how local authorities will 'improve service performance and reduce wasteful expenditure ...'.
- 7.2. Additional guidance on the government's requirements was set out in a letter to local authority Chief Executives from the Minister for Local Government, dated 16 April 2024. The letter is available at appendix 2 for information.
- 7.3. The council's productivity plan is available at appendix 1. The plan recognises that the council has experienced a period of challenge in recent years, culminating in a council commissioned report from the Society of Local Government Chief Executives and senior managers (Solace) warning that the authority is at risk of failing in its statutory duty to deliver Best Value.
- 7.4. The council takes its duty to deliver Best Value seriously and is committed to improving at pace. As the productivity plan sets out,

considerable work has taken place to date, with further activity planned to restore sound governance and service improvement.

- 7.5. The ministerial letter dated 16 April set a deadline of 19 July 2024 for plans to be returned to DLUHC by email. Following Executive endorsement, the plan will be submitted to DLUHC ahead of the deadline and will also be uploaded to the council's website. As the plan notes, progress on improvement will be reported as part of the council's usual reporting processes.

## **8. Consultations**

Members of the Joint Management Team have provided content for inclusion in the plan. The Executive have been consulted as the plan has been developed.

## **9. Key Risks**

- 9.1. There are no risks arising from this report.

## **10. Financial Implications**

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report, though there may be financial implications arising from the initiatives it describes, such as those that are yet to be fully scoped. For the avoidance of doubt, all initiatives will, in accordance with the council's usual governance and decision-making processes, be subject to full business cases to ensure that benefits are clearly identified, tracked and realised.

## **11. Legal Implications**

There are no legal implications arising from this report.

## **12. Human Resource Implications**

There are no Human Resources implications arising from this report.

## **13. Equality and Diversity Implications**

There are no equality and diversity implications arising from this report.

## **14. Climate Change/Sustainability Implications**

There are no climate change/sustainability implications arising from this report.

## **15. Summary of Options**

The Executive has two options:

- 15.1 Option 1 – note the productivity plan, make any comments on its contents and endorse its submission to DLUHC ahead of the 19 July 2024 deadline. This is the recommended option.
- 15.2 Option 2 – note the productivity plan and choose not to endorse its submission to DLUHC ahead of the 19 July deadline.

## **16. Conclusion**

The Executive are requested to endorse the productivity plan for submission to DLUHC for the aforesaid reasons.

## **17. Background Papers**

None.

## **18. Appendices**

- 18.1 Appendix 1 – Guildford Borough Council's productivity plan.
- 18.2 Appendix 2 – Ministerial letter from Rt Hon Simon Hoare MP, Minister for Local Government (16 April 2024).

Please ensure the following service areas have signed off your report.  
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