

## Cambridgeshire County Council

Productivity Plan Submission to the  
Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities July 2024**How the Council has transformed the way it designs and delivers services to make better use of resources:**

The Council has a clear vision and seven ambitions set out in its Strategic Framework ([CCC Strategic Framework 2023 to 2028](#)). It was updated and presented alongside a balanced budget for 2024/25 and the 2024-29 Medium Term Financial Plan in February 2024 ([2024/25 Balanced Budget Plan](#) / [Medium Term Financial Strategy](#)). The Council has consistently set and delivered balanced budgets, with strong financial and performance management through regular open reporting and monitoring to our Policy and Service Committees - [Strategy, Resources and Performance Committee March 2024](#).

The Council has undertaken proactive steps, over a number of years to make our data and performance available to residents through our [Cambridgeshire Insight Website](#).

In delivering on the ambitions over the last three years the Council has secured value for money, improvement and transformation, for example through delivering:

- adult reablement through redesigned locality based care teams and working with our partners in the NHS and across the voluntary sector to provide local support to help to our elderly residents live at home well and for longer - [Our Reablement Offer](#) / [Our Volunteering](#). This has helped manage demand pressure and keep costs down.
- a new Parent Champions pilot programme, based on evidence that when it comes to choosing childcare, parents are more likely to trust other parents than professionals. This was launched in partnership with the support of [Cambridgeshire Early Years and Childcare service](#). This is helping more children be ready for school and prevent future costs.
- 47% carbon reduction ([Council marks progress to Net Zero](#)) and renewable energy income generation via schemes such as [Swaffham Prior renewable heat network](#) which have been recognised nationally, set to raise £7 million additional funds.
- More flexible and multi-purpose buildings that include our partners, and community facilities such as libraries, safe, warm, welcoming spaces which have been recognised nationally ([Cambridgeshire Libraries of Sanctuary award](#)). This redesign across our estate will enable nearly £3 million to be saved in our building running costs.
- Shared or collaborated services with other councils, where these arrangements continue to deliver satisfactory performance and good value, in

areas such as: financial transactions, insurance, payroll and pensions, legal services, trading standards and income management.

- In-house procurement and commercial resources and practices to challenge our third party spend, realising £4.5 million of savings.
- New income through further commercial opportunities that has yielded £3 million to date.
- Over 13,000 streetlight bulb replacements with new energy efficient LED lighting that will save £1.7m per annum.
- More accessible customer services through our contact centre and website services - [Contact us - Cambridgeshire County Council](#)
- Establishing in county provision for two new special schools, as well as similar in-county additional capacity for children with learning disabilities and children's care to remove the high costs of out of county placements.

We have concluded the majority of previously shared arrangements with Peterborough City Council and created structures and operating models focused on Cambridgeshire to achieve improved outcomes for our residents. Starting with changes to the Council's Corporate Leadership Team and continuing into a range of services, in accordance with the Council's Strategic Framework and the 2021 LGA Peer Challenge recommendations. Aligned with our [People Strategy](#), the Council has reduced its consultancy spend by 55% (£2 million) since 2021 and has invested in the development of our employees, including our apprenticeships programme ([Cambridgeshire becomes first County Council to achieve Silver employers' award](#)) and launching our [Social Care Academy](#). The Council is continuing to 'grow our own' workforce to further reduce the need for high cost agency workers.

Looking forward, the Council is setting out an ambitious strategy to change the way it operates, to ensure that it remains within its financial envelope. This was highlighted in section 13.22 of the Business Plan to Council in February 2024 ([Business Plan](#)). The Change Strategy will focus the Council on redesigning service delivery to achieve the Council's Ambitions, particularly pivoting the organisation to be Closer to Communities. This strategy is underpinned by a number of enabling programmes, including digital, discussed in the next section of this plan. These changes will focus not only on savings but on managing demand and inflationary pressures through preventative measures such as stronger locality, partner-based working in services such as reablement, fostering and social care, and improved contract management. Strong project management of this change also includes benefit realisation and milestone management to monitor the implementation and measure the effects.

## **How the Council plans to take advantage of technology and make better use of data to improve decision making, service design and use of resources:**

The Council's [Digital Strategies and action plans to deliver](#) were approved by Councillors in 2023 to enable and direct securing greater productivity from a [Data Strategy](#) a [Technology Roadmap 2023-28](#), whilst also ensuring a focus on [Cyber Security Strategy 2023-28](#).

The aim of these strategies at the heart of the Council's change strategy is to enable more user-friendly digital access to the council and to provide simple, automated first point of digital resolution, using artificial and robotic solutions and data warehousing to improve our continual learning, improvement and cost reduction. We will be developing our data warehouse over the next 12 to 24 months to draw data together to further improve decision making, planning and enable greater use of artificial intelligence. We are also working with our NHS partners over data integration around social care and are keen to continue this with other public sector partners.

## **How the Council plans to reduce wasteful spend within the organisation and systems**

The Council has a strong business planning process which includes engagement and scrutiny through Policy and Service Committees. There are business partners across Corporate Services, such as Finance, HR and Procurement who regularly check and challenge service spending, as well as a workforce expenditure control panel covering the whole Council, led by the Chief Executive. All expenditure and procurement decisions above £0.5 million are for decision by our Policy and Service Committees and must include robust commentary to inform decision making on the financial consequences.

As part of our business planning the Council continually challenges the way it provides services, reviewing the opportunities to “build or buy” to meet its needs and, if the latter, how it manages both the procurement and resulting contract well. The Council has two transformation reserves (the Just Transition Fund and Digital and Change Reserve) totalling of £13.1 million ([Earmarked reserves statement as at February 2024](#)) specifically set aside to drive change and invest to save schemes, across the next four years. There are already plans in place to use these funds to drive out further savings and improvements.

A key ask from the Government has been for councils to examine and explain spending on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. Cambridgeshire is proud to strive to be more equal, more diverse, and more inclusive as an employer, public policy maker, commissioner/buyer of supplies and services and as a direct provider of services. Our Vision to create a Fairer, Greener and More Caring Cambridgeshire is very much about addressing the deep-rooted inequalities that exist in the county and improving the quality of life, for everyone.

The Council recognises that we have statutory duties arising from the Equality Act and preceding legislation, as well as our Public Sector Equality Duty (which first came into force in 2011). Our approach is set out in our [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy](#). However, we do not focus on equality, diversity and inclusion

because of the law, we do it because it's the right thing to do. Right for our communities and right for our employees.

The level of spending on EDI is £150,000 which equates to 0.014% of our gross spend. The Council considers this investment is crucial for the recruitment and retention of a diverse and highly motivated workforce with lived experiences, such as disabilities, which enables us to shape continued improvement in our services and customer journeys. The Council has chosen to go further than the law requires, for example, following the unanimous decision of County Councillors last year to recognise care experience, at any age, as having the same status as a legally protected characteristic. We see our EDI work as intrinsic to all that we do, not as an additional function which is logged and reported on separately.

The Council also operates in a multi-tiered environment, working with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority, City and District Councils as well as being accountable for the Greater Cambridge City Deal spend via the Greater Cambridge Partnership and associated Joint Committee arrangements. The Political and Officer Leadership from all of these bodies meets frequently to explore areas of improvement and value for money, such as digital connectivity, transport and waste. The County Council is also the lead body for a place based Anti-Poverty Commission, with coproduction and lived experience at its heart. This commission will bring together a group of independent commissioners to:

- review data and evidence relating to poverty in Cambridgeshire and how the system currently responds to this,
- engage with residents who have 'lived experience' of poverty,
- build a set of realistic and impactful recommendations for the local system to consider in tackling poverty.

In managing the organisation and leading change, the Council works in partnership with its recognised Trade Unions and 0.03% of the pay bill is spent on union official facilities time.

Finally, we note that there are several Government policies and practices which in themselves drive costs and inefficiencies which, if reviewed, would enable all councils to make significant improvement in productivity and value for money. These include:

- Provide a multiyear needs-based funding system and settlement that enables local authorities to plan for the longer term.
- Addressing the long standing financial inequality between different areas by implementing the Fair Funding Review for Local Government and ensuring that future funding is based on current and projected data sets, rather than historic information.
- DWP supporting enabling greater data integration to enable more automated processing in areas such as blue badge applications, benefit claims and court of protection cases.

- Co-ordinating the requirements of place shaping between the NHS and local councils to enable place preventative planning and shaping being prioritised alongside delivery such as acute services.
- Enabling greater freedoms over ring fenced grants to enable greater resource targeting. This includes the more flexible use of Public Health Grant monies for locally led, preventative activity, rather than nationally mandated universal programmes.
- Reducing the multi-layered and costly inspection and regulation burden applied to local authorities which requires bespoke reporting and a duplication of effort across multiple spending Departments.
- Reduce bureaucratic bidding processes for both revenue and capital funding that bear no relation to evaluation criteria and awards.
- Resolving the position on unregulated placements for children and young people and court award cases to enable greater management of the provider market or provide additional funding for greater local authority led provision.
- Create an environment of national development of single line of business application systems to secure economies of scale and greater potential for use of AI. This Productivity Plan will be monitored by Councillors, and we welcome feedback from Government to take into our future consideration and learning from this Plan.