Productivity Plan

2024 - 2025

North East Derbyshire District Council

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Introduction

North East Derbyshire District Council is pleased to present this Productivity Plan. It is in response to the request from the Department of Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) that all local authorities publish a plan this year.

Over several years, the Council has delivered many initiatives and changes to improve efficiency and service delivery. Compared to 2010, our spending power has reduced by 38% and despite this our 2024 residents survey suggests 58% of residents are satisfied with how the we run things. There is always room for improvement and this plan outlines how we have, and will continue to, transform its operations to make the best use of resources and continuously improve services.

We have carefully considered the request from DLUHC and our Plan addresses the key questions they raise. It details:

- How we have transformed the way we design and deliver services to make better use of resources.

- How we plan to take advantage of technology and make better use of data to improve decision making, service design and use of resources.

- Our plans to reduce wasteful spend within our organisation and systems.

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

We are well placed to respond to the challenges facing Local Authorities and and we have a track record in delivering improvements that will benefit our residents through efficiency and financial prudence.

This plan should be considered alongside other strategic documents, including our Risk Management Plan, Medium Term Financial Plan and our emerging Engagement and Improvement Strategy.

Medium term financial plan 2023/24 to 2027/28

The Council approved its budget for 2024/25 in January along with a council tax increase of 2.99%. The small shortfall forecast is funded from reserves, but it is fully expected that efficiency savings during the year will be sufficient to meet this.

Financial challenges increase in the latter years of the plan, largely because of the uncertainty surrounding national funding. We have been operating in a challenging financial climate for several years and have an excellent track record of both identifying and delivering service efficiencies as required.

The table below summarises the position:

	Planning Original 2024/25 £000	Planning Budget 2025/26 £000	Planning Budget 2026/27 £000	Planning Budget 2027/28 £000
General Fund Shortfall before council tax increase	302	972	1,852	1,971
Application of council tax increase assuming 2.99% (max) each year	(202)	(404)	(606)	(808)
General Fund Shortfall after applying indicative council tax increase	100	568	1,246	1,163

NB - () denote income/surplus.

Note: Council Tax increases are indicative and not included in the MTFP at Appendix 1 as the final decision rests with Council each year.

[Medium Term Financial Plan 202324 to 202728.pdf (ne-derbyshire.gov.uk)](https://www.ne-derbyshire.gov.uk)

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

Boosting productivity

A new leadership structure combined with performance monitoring through data dashboards and resident surveys optimises resource allocation.

Enhanced services

Hybrid mail, shared facilities with Rykneld Homes, and digitalisation (including online services and meeting streaming) have improved efficiency and accessibility. Customer feedback led to extended leisure centre hours. Staff development through a digital platform further strengthens service delivery.

Future vision

An Engagement & Improvement strategy and a recent £30 million investment in leisure centres (including a new facility) aim to boost attendance, revenue, and sustainability. Digitisation efforts across the whole organisation will target further efficiency gains.

Strategic investments

Capital spending focuses on areas like leisure centres, town centre development, a new Streetscene depot, and development land, aiming to increase income, service improvements, and affordable housing delivery.

Preventative measures

Regular asset surveys, a "grow your own" staff development approach, a reviewed risk management strategy, and strategic Council Plan alignment ensure long-term value and resilience to all we do.

Wider collaboration

We lobby for regional improvements through the East Midlands County Combined Authority and collaborate with neighbouring public partners on shared services and facilities.

In essence, we prioritise efficiency, digitalisation, and resident-centric service delivery. Strategic investments and collaboration fuel the vision for a sustainable and high-quality public service future.

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

We recognise the power of technology and data in improving decision-making, service design, and resource utilisation. Here's how we plan to move forward:

Enhancing data quality and accessibility

Management dashboard and data hub: These existing tools will be continuously developed to strengthen management oversight and data-driven decision making.

Resident access: We publish an annual report with progress updates, performance against KPIs, and Oflog metrics, providing some level of data accessibility to residents. In addition, residents have access to view public meetings where performance is regularly discussed.

Our website and social media channels are widely used especially for front line services with high customer interaction.

Challenges and opportunities

Legacy systems: Fragmented IT systems create data silos, making it difficult to collate information across departments. Cloud-based infrastructure is a step towards improvement, but cultural change is necessary to move away from departmental data ownership.

Collaboration through data sharing

Shared services: Collaboration with partners through six shared services allows for frequent data and knowledge exchange.

Benchmarking: Participation in formal benchmarking initiatives facilitates data comparison and learning from others.

Harnessing new technologies

M365 implementation: We have recently implemented M365 and collaboration with partner councils on staff and process development aims to maximise benefits and drive cultural change towards data-driven processes.

Predictive analytics and AI: There is an openness to exploring new technologies like AI and predictive analytics and we recognise these can help with tasks like forecasting resource needs, identifying service gaps, and streamlining workflows. It is expected the technology will be implemented through existing IT Systems led by an organisational review process of all major systems and how AI will benefit.

We are on the right track with our existing initiatives. However, overcoming legacy system challenges and fostering a data-driven culture are crucial for maximising the benefits of technology and data in the future. By focusing on data accessibility, collaboration, and exploring new technologies, we can make informed decisions, design better services, and optimise resource allocation, ultimately leading to a more efficient and resident-centric council.

What are our plans to reduce wasteful spend within our organisation and systems?

We adopt multi faceted approach to identify and reduce wasteful spending:

Process mapping: Processes are being mapped to streamline workflows, create staff training materials, and ensure clear audit trails. This is being implemented across the organisation to eliminate inefficiencies and improve services.

Budget review: Annual line-by-line budget reviews are conducted to challenge spending, identify potential waste, and ensure accurate and realistic forecasts.

Service plan alignment: Service plans are reviewed annually and must align with the Council Plan. Service delivery not contributing to overall goals is reviewed and reshaped.

Invest to Save Approach: We utilise the "invest to save" principle, where upfront investments aim to generate future efficiencies or revenue growth. Recent examples include:

- **Hybrid mail:** Reduced mail cost and processing time.
- **Collocation with Rykneld Homes:** Reduced office space and improved customer access.
- **Leisure centre decarbonisation:** Lowered carbon emissions and utility costs.
- **Talent Pipeline:** Recruiting talented people to improve organisational health and efficiency, looking towards the next generation.

Staff equality, diversity and inclusivity (EDI) training:

While there are no dedicated EDI Champions, EDI is integrated throughout the council. Training and team practices emphasise Equality Impact Assessments, ensuring EDI is embedded in daily operations.

Robust financial management: There is a strong commitment to being fiscally responsible and efficient and to demonstrate strong financial governance which is reflected in the Council Plan. Progress against these commitments is regularly scrutinised through the delivery management process and the budget monitoring process.

There are strong financial controls embedded in the financial management systems. Internal and external audits assess the effectiveness of these controls. There are clear spending delegations and thresholds detailed in the Constitution.

Transparency: This is important to us and we comply fully with the Transparency Code. The recent investment in technology to digitise meeting facilities has significantly enhanced resident access, participation and transparency of decision making.

Shared office functions and training: We actively seeks opportunities to share functions with other public sector partners. We currently share facilities and services with various organisations like Rykneld Homes, Derbyshire County Council and Citizens Advice. Back-office functions including ICT and internal audit are also shared with neighbouring councils.

Collaboration with upper-tier Council: As the East Midlands County Combined Authority (EMCCA) is newly established, it's too early to assess its impact. However, collaboration efforts during the Devolution Deal drafting stage continue to be leveraged and remain positive.

What are the barriers preventing progress that the Government can help to reduce or remove?

We possess the capability to identify and implement productivity and service improvements but inevitably do encounter barriers to delivery. Here's a breakdown of the key barriers we have identified that would benefit from Government intervention along side potential solutions:

Financial constraints

Council Tax Inequity: Greater flexibility around current council tax referendum principles would be helpful, but equalisation of the council tax system is essential to ensure that low tax base councils benefit in equal measure to those with high taxbases. To demonstrate, our taxbase is 20% lower than comparable districts with a high taxbases.

Insufficient funding for waste changes: New waste management regulations come with substantial costs, exceeding the provided funding. Government support for capital expenditure, including the forecast cost to build a new facility, is crucial.

Impact of social housing regulation changes: New consumer standards introduced for social housing landlords including councils like us came into effect in April 2024. The standards aim to protect tenants and improve the services they receive.

Balancing financial constraints whilst ensuring compliance is challenging. The Government can empower us and other stock owning councils by collaborating closely on the impact the changes are having on housing delivery and recognising that support including financial resources may be required to enhance our services and ensure compliance.

Aging assets: Maintaining our aging assets requires significant investment, limiting resources available for service improvement initiatives.

Resource limitations

Time constraints due to limited resources: While improvement opportunities exist, implementing them takes time, a luxury limited by current resource allocation.

AI and technological advances: We won't be alone in an appetite for technological advances but we're largely dependant on private sector providers of IT systems to develop solutions for the public sector. Government could support this at scale, working with private sector IT systems suppliers for common local authority functions.

Future policy and regulatory issues

Business rates reset: The anticipated reset of business rates has the potential to significantly reduce the level of income generated, having a substantial, detrimental impact on our budget.

Business rates retention at a local level, allowing districts to retain growth would be of significant benefit to us.

Public trust and engagement

Public perception: Negative public perception of local government discourages resident engagement and considering careers in the public sector.

Support for initiatives that improve public perception of local government and recruitment campaigns promoting careers in Local Government would improve positive engagement and the supply of high quality staff.

By working to resolve the above, the government can empower us and similar councils to fully optimise their services and deliver better outcomes for their communities.

Equalities Statement

North East Derbyshire District Council is committed to equalities as an employer and when delivering the services it provides to all sections of the community.

The Council believes that no person should be treated unfairly and is committed to eliminating all forms of discrimination, advancing equality and fostering good relations between all groups in society.

Access for All statement

You can request this document or information in another format such as large print or language or contact us by:

- **Phone: 01246 231111**
- **Email: connectne@ne-derbyshire.gov.uk**
- **Text: 07800 00 24 25**
- **BSL Video Call:** a FREE, three way video call with us and a BSL interpreter.
- **Call with Relay UK** via textphone or app on **0800 500 888**. FREE phone service for anyone who has difficulty hearing or speaking.
- **Visiting our offices at Wingerworth:** 2013 Mill Lane, **S42 6NG**.