
Meeting of the Fit for the Future/Council Sustainability Committee – 27th November, 2024

Report of the Chief Executive

Council Plan Progress Report (1st April 2024 – Sept 2024)

Purpose of report

1. This report provides a summary of the achievements made against the Council Plan 2024-25 during the period from April to September 2024.

Recommendation

2. It is recommended that this Committee note the progress against the Council Plan for the period April to September 2024

Background

3. The one-year Council Plan for 2024-25, launched in April, emphasises improvement and financial sustainability, focusing on establishing a sustainable budget while protecting essential services. The plan outlines five key priority areas:
 - Financial sustainability, efficiency, and providing best value
 - Governance and control
 - Leadership and culture
 - Delivering for our customers, residents, and communities
 - Supporting businesses and the local economy

The delivery of these priorities is assured through key performance indicators, employee objectives, and aligning projects to the council's improvement plan.

The delivery of the Council Plan is formally monitored through the regular review of financial performance, project delivery, corporate financial indicators and directorate KPIs. These are reviewed at Corporate Management Team, Cabinet Policy Group and Scrutiny Committees.

From April to September 2024, progress towards achieving our outcomes against the Council Plan are detailed within section 4 progress update.

In addition to the qualitative information, we measure progress against a streamlined set of agreed key performance indicators via a monthly reporting dashboard. The dashboard can be accessed here: [Dudley MBC corporate performance](#).

Progress Update Report

4. This section provides a summary of the achievements made against the Council Plan 2024-25 during the period from April to September 2024, aligned with the identified priorities.
5. The report highlights key achievements to date and does not constitute a comprehensive list. Efforts to deliver on the plan will continue throughout the remainder of the financial year, directly supported by the Dudley Improvement Plan.

Priority: Financial sustainability, efficiency and providing best value

6. The council is making progress in enhancing financial management and operational efficiency with regular budget reporting enabling stakeholders to closely track expenditures and minimise unnecessary spend. Insights from monthly budget reporting have improved transparency and accountability, allowing us to focus on maintaining essential services while providing the best value and working towards financial sustainability.
7. To further ensure our financial sustainability, we have sought external advice and brought in external expertise to drive forward the delivery of savings.
8. Through streamlining our recruitment process and hiring strategically, we are managing costs. The "think before you spend" initiative encourages careful financial decision-making across all departments.
9. Our ongoing evaluation of the council's assets for better utilisation has resulted in cost savings and will continue to do so in the future.
10. Key outcomes and achievements:

Reducing our costs and making savings:

- Enhanced spending controls on recruitment and contracts has achieved savings of over £5 million.
- Ceasing of the two hours free parking to generate an estimated £3.5m in revenue over the next 3 years – delivered in October
- Charging for garden waste disposal: Delivering £2.6M income against a forecast of £1.31M.
- Closure of Brookes Bistro: Cease a loss-making service.
- Leisure Centres outsourcing: Seeking cost-effective management options.
- Town Halls and Bars out for concession: Reduce cost

New ways of working:

- Operating model: Developed operating model for a modern effective Council
- Switch DC+ in person contact to online, telephony, libraries, housing hubs and children's hubs and dispose of building: Reduce cost and raise capital. This transformation work has focussed on supporting digitally excluded individuals and those with complex needs closer to their home, through existing assets and libraries as well as re-introducing Community Information Points across the borough.

Reviewing our council assets:

- Accelerating disposal programme: closure of Ward House, Priory Hall (1st Floor) and 4 Ednam Road (in October)

These initiatives collectively position the council for greater efficiency and effectiveness in serving our community and providing best value.

Priority: Governance and control

11. The council has made strides in enhancing governance and control. In June 2024, a new governance structure was finalised, aligning internal and external governance meetings with the council's specific challenges. This shift has strengthened our focus on regulatory compliance and assurance, supported by timely and accurate reporting leading to positive check and challenge and resulting in better decision making.
12. Key outcomes and achievements:

Building and strengthening governance and control:

- Strengthened Democratic Services: Reviewed the service and created capacity to enhance operations and governance. Sourced external monitoring officer capacity to assist with governance review and to address key actions from external reports.
- Workshops, designed and facilitated by internal teams and the Local Government Association (LGA), are underway to strengthen the relationships between members and officers, enhancing mutual understanding, improving overall working dynamics and setting the standards for open and transparent decision-making.
- Greater use of Thrive Learning Platform for employees and members to foster employee and member engagement, providing more effective communication channels, training and support on governance and decision-making
- Overview and Scrutiny arrangements are being kept under review and will be the subject of a report to Full Council in December
- Corporate Management Team emphasis on completing internal audit actions in time.

Improved monitoring and reporting of performance, projects and risk with clear accountability and assurance:

- Better scrutiny of budget performance and operational performance reporting: Monthly reviews at Corporate Management Team (CMT), Cabinet Policy Group (CPG) and Overview & Scrutiny Committee.
- Regular reporting and clear accountability have fostered transparency and improved trust among stakeholders. Further improvements are necessary and will continue to build and strengthen supported by the Dudley Improvement Plan.
- A detailed review is to be undertaken of the Corporate Management Team/Corporate Risk Register.

Priority: Leadership and culture

13. The council is making progress focusing on key areas of collaboration, service streamlining, and a stronger, more cohesive leadership culture. Results from the recent pulse survey show high levels of readiness for change, with 87% of respondents acknowledging a need for change and 81% feeling they have a role to play in driving that change.

14. Key outcomes and achievements:

Define our core values and culture:

- Broad engagement has been completed with multiple employee groups at different levels in the organisation to identify core values.
- Insight Survey on Member Perceptions to inform culture change plan supported by the LGA, is crucial in shaping future initiatives.

Encourage employees to participate in continuous improvement and sustainability:

- Pulse Survey Design and Results – key themes were identified from employee feedback to inform activities linked to the improvement plan.
- Regular engagement sessions held with senior change leaders to provide change leadership across the organisation.

Strengthen our staff learning and development to enhance skills and knowledge:

- Thrive Learning Platform – provide a platform for technology-enabled learning and more flexible delivery of learning/training to employees and members, foster stronger engagement, consolidate different learning systems within the council and offer more effective communication channels.

Priority: Delivering for our customers, residents and communities

15. Ongoing efforts and initiatives continue to enhance customer experience, delivering service for our residents and promoting community wellbeing.
16. Our new street clean operating model aligned to the Council's Community Forum areas, providing clear accountability and responsibility for the leadership and management of defined geographical areas of the Borough. As well as working with community groups, these areas aligned with those of partners such as Housing and the Police, ensuring clear lines of communication and to allow a better and more joined up response to activity.
17. The Your Health Dudley service is commissioned by Dudley to provide health improvement support for Dudley residents, including support to quit smoking, manage healthier weight, reduce alcohol consumption and receive health checks in the community. The Atlantic House recovery community supports people to address alcohol and substance misuse issues and Brook Dudley are commissioned to provide sexual and reproductive health services to Dudley residents.
18. These initiatives reflect a commitment to leveraging technology, enhancing accessibility, delivering services and fostering community health and support in Dudley.
19. Key outcomes and achievements:

Enhancing our customer experience:

Through digital solutions we are improving customer engagement and cater for individuals. 61% of our resident's now self-serve where online self-service is available via MyDudley; with an average star rating for our platform of 4.3 out of 5 stars. Information sharing via Dudley.Gov has also been enhanced providing resources and information to ensure our residents feel safe and healthy. Our response to customer feedback has shifted from 65% of upheld complaints closed in May down to 40% in September 2024 this is because of cross directorate shared learning.

- Review of Dudley Council Plus: Transition centralised in-person customer services to local access points, improving accessibility for residents across the borough.
- Ethel Care System: Technology for home reablement explored, pilot to launch in October, minimizing the need for in-person staff visits.
- Customer feedback group: Internal group share directorate learning on complaints undertaking lessons learned assessments, improving response times for our residents.

Empower people to make independent choices:

- Supporting people with disabilities through transition from childhood /Adulthood: Transition Board approved in September, next steps scoping exercise.

Priority: Supporting businesses and the local economy

20. We continue to ensure access to quality education and training is available for all our residents. Our ‘I Can Dudley’ initiative is making a real difference in the community, especially for underrepresented groups, resulting in 50% of the first cohort securing permanent employment (cohort 1 September 2024).
21. The development of key regeneration strategies, like the Dudley Economic Regeneration Strategy and Dudley Based Place Strategy, will help to prioritise regeneration activities and interventions aligned to the emerging West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) integrated settlement and this approach is helping to prioritise year 3 UK Shared Prosperity Funding which has included enhancements our to community spaces and has already contributed to improvements to parks and green spaces. through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. The Stourbridge Business Improvement District (BID), which was recently established, is another example of a placed based approach to economic development, with the BID aiming to create a vibrant, supportive environment for local businesses and residents to prosper.
22. Key outcomes and achievements:
 - Using our Ofsted inspected adult education budget for academic year 2023-24 over 2000 residents have been supported to gain skills and qualifications with 47% of all participants residing in our top 20% areas of deprivation.
 - Dudley Economic Regeneration Strategy approved by cabinet in March 2024
 - Dudley Cultural Strategy approved in August 2024.
 - Dudley Place Based Strategy in September 2024.
 - Around £200,000 shared prosperity fund has been awarded through the Dudley SME Grant and the Dudley Decarbonisation and Net Zero Grant. The grants remain open too small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the borough that have been trading for more than 12 months.
 - The Stourbridge Business Improvement District (BID), has been established - Stourbridge Bid

These initiatives are effectively monitored and reported on, allowing for accountability and continuous improvement.

Finance

23. An active review of the delivery against the Council Plan should identify budget risks and opportunities.

Law

24. There are no legal implications of this report.

Risk Management

25. This report does not create any “material” risks. However, the approach to identifying, managing and reporting on risks is to be reviewed.

Equality Impact

26. There are no equality impacts from this report, however individual projects or work areas that contribute to this report will carry out their own assessments regarding equality.

Human Resources/Organisational Development

27. There are no HR and OD implications of this report, however any projects or workstreams that contribute to improvements will follow policy and procedures.

Commercial/Procurement

28. There are no commercial or procurement implications associated with this report.

Environment / Climate Change

29. There is no direct environment or climate change impact on this report

Council Plan

30. The Council Plan 2024-25 will ensure a focus on those priorities and projects that will support the overall sustainability of the Council and the services we deliver to our residents. This report includes key achievements to date delivered against the plan, which enables CMT and CPG and Committees to monitor performance ensuring we continue to provide value for money to our residents and communities.

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Appendix

Presentation

List of Background Documents

[Council Plan 2024-2025](#)

[Dudley MBC corporate performance dashboard.](#)