

MEDWAY COUNCIL PRODUCTIVITY PLAN

2024/25

Proud to be Medway



FOREWORD

Alongside publication of the Local Government Finance Settlement for 2024/25, the government announced a new requirement for all local authorities to publish a Productivity Plan.

At the end of 2023 we invited CIPFA to undertake a Resilience Review, and produced our One Medway Financial Improvement and Transformation Plan (FIT Plan).

The FIT Plan pulled together the saving proposals underpinning the 2024/25 Budget, alongside a suite of further improvement actions.

On 16 April 2024, local authorities were asked to formally begin the process of Productivity Plans, and this Productivity Plan addresses the themes and questions posed by Government.

Medway performs admirably in terms of our productivity. We charge the lowest Council Tax in Kent and, thanks to the commitment and dedication of our teams and innovation in the way we do things such as the establishment of our Medway Development Company, we are able to deliver:

- good quality social care
- a vibrant cultural offer
- an impressive regeneration programme
- an extensive suite of capital investments
- our outstanding weekly waste collection.

Working with Government, securing freedoms and flexibilities, there is the opportunity to do even more for the people and place of Medway.



Richard Hicks

Chief Executive
Medway Council



THEME 1

TRANSFORMING HOW WE DESIGN AND DELIVER SERVICES

How we've become more productive:

- ◆ Through a leaner management structure, with only three directorates.
- ◆ By investing in our staff, through a review of the local pay model, a new leadership development programme and a focus on staff development and succession planning.
- ◆ By embracing hybrid working and using technology, such as Microsoft Teams, to improve communication and collaboration.

How we measure productivity

- ◆ Medway has the lowest Council tax in Kent.
- ◆ Our One Medway Council Plan is underpinned by 89 key performance indicators across the council's five priorities.
- ◆ This is supported by the council's Financial Improvement and Transformation Plan comprising £34million savings this year and a further 83 key improvement actions.
- ◆ Quarterly Council Plan monitoring to Cabinet and monthly monitoring of the budget and the FIT Plan via CMT.
- ◆ Member led oversight boards for both Adult Social Care and Children's Services meet monthly to review financial and operational performance.
- ◆ Business intelligence tools are used to analyse and provide services with performance data and insight.

How we've improved services

- ◆ Since Ofsted judged our Children's Services inadequate in 2019, we have invested heavily in our improvement journey, achieving a 'good' rating last year.
- ◆ Alternative delivery models, such as our joint venture, Medway Norse, our trading company Kyndi Ltd. and our housing development company, MDC Ltd.
- ◆ By bringing debt advice and welfare services back in house to create a holistic Benefits and Financial Welfare Service, compliments for the service have increased to 163 from just 6 during the previous year.
- ◆ The increase in online services and reduction in telephone calls has allowed us to redesign our Customer and Business Support Service to achieve savings and increase productivity.

How we plan to transform services

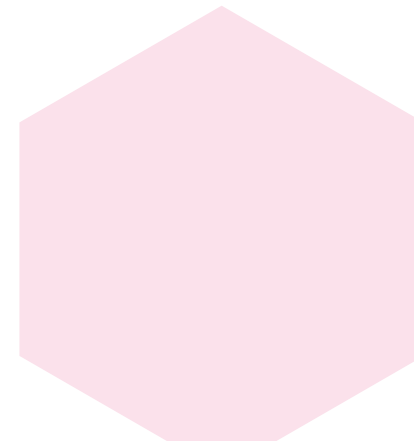
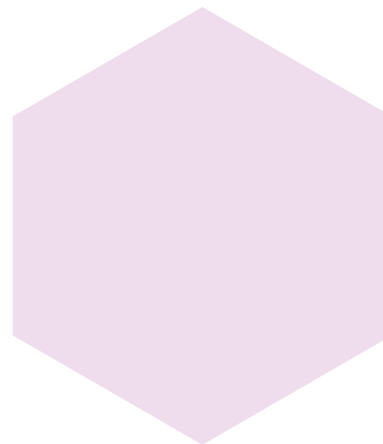
- ◆ Medway 2.0 is our approach to transforming end to end online services to deliver an excellent user experience.
- ◆ Business analysts have been employed to map current processes, systems and resources. Service designers will then work with the services themselves to redesign service delivery from the customers perspective, using the right technology.
- ◆ The FIT Plan comprises 80 improvement actions, to transform the way the council operates over the medium term.

Services with the greatest potential for savings

- ◆ Adult Social Care spends £142million (25% of the council's gross expenditure and it has commenced a comprehensive transformation programme, including 'Care for Medway', greater use of assistive technology and closer working with Housing Services.
- ◆ We will be commissioning a comprehensive waste strategy to review the process from collection, through transfer, to disposal and recycling.
- ◆ The Integrated Hubs project will conduct a complete review of our operational estate, with a view to providing hubs delivering a wider range of services.

Investing in capital

- ◆ The Capital Strategy sets out the investment required in our assets, but also identifies opportunities.
- ◆ 'Care for Medway' will require capital investment to deliver in-house provision.
- ◆ A £42million scheme of house acquisition to tackle the homelessness crisis.
- ◆ Investment in additional capacity for children with special educational needs has been funded from borrowing.
- ◆ A £120million pipeline of housing development being delivered by MDC Ltd. to create homes, kick-start regeneration and stimulate the market.
- ◆ Flexible use of capital receipts to deliver our transformation programme.



Investing in prevention

- Investment in assistive technology to support adults to live independently.
- An increased focus on supporting children to transition to adulthood, so that they can live as independent lives as possible in their communities.
- Ensuring that 'strength based' approaches to assessment are embedded, including an effective community led approach to demand management.
- By investing in our new Benefits and Financial Welfare Service we will support vulnerable families and prevent them needing to access statutory services.

Wider locally-led reforms

- There is the potential for greater devolution by working with Kent County Council and the Kent districts. Medway Council is supportive of the principle of devolution, however the requirement for an elected mayor may present the main hurdle.
- Medway is one of 30 local authorities that has a Health Determinants Research Collaboration (HDRC). The HDRC aims to create capacity and capability in Medway Council to conduct and use research to inform the development of policy and practice in the council.

The National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) has shown over the last 20 years that organisations that undertake research have better outcomes and better staff recruitment and retention. Up to 80% of what influences health and wellbeing is directly or indirectly influenced by the local authority, therefore if a local authority undertakes research (and acts upon this intelligence) this would be expected to lead to greater efficiencies and improved health outcomes for residents

- Since April 2024 we have started our journey to becoming a Marmot Place, where social determinants of health are considered front and centre in how the council operates. This work, with the support of the Institute of Health Equity at UCL, including Sir Michael Marmot, will transform the way that Medway Council and partners work together to reduce inequity in employment, education, housing and access to green spaces and improve outcomes for the most disadvantaged.



THEME 2

MAKING BETTER USE OF TECHNOLOGY AND DATA

How we plan to improve data quality and use it better

- ◆ As a Council we are data rich, but this data is often held in different systems.
- ◆ A data lake pilot was developed to join up data in housing, Council tax, and health systems, which enabled us to better support vulnerable residents during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- ◆ To build on this work, Medway have identified the creation of a single data platform to deliver complete, accurate, and accessible datasets and insights as a key opportunity to build a single view of the resident.

- ◆ Our data platform will build in data governance and security by design, allowing us to share data more effectively within the council and with our partners.

Making data available to our residents

- ◆ We regularly publish data on our website and have created a “data hub” as a repository for public data: www.medway.gov.uk/dathub.
- ◆ By collating publicly available information we are able to support residents and community groups to apply for funding, enabling them to be more robust and self-sufficient.

How we will address the issue of legacy systems

- ◆ A recent systems audit has identified that the council had over 40 core ICT systems and platforms.
- ◆ The Medway 2.0 transformation programme aims to reduce legacy systems by redesigning services to be more efficient, user-centric, and less dependent on outdated technology, enabling us to streamline processes and improve the overall customer experience.
- ◆ Medway 2.0 will redesign and reimagine services from the resident's point of view, without being limited by current systems, structures, behaviours, and culture.

How we share data with our partners

- ◆ We work to identify key strategic data sharing partnership opportunities, and regularly share data with organisations such as the NHS, ICB, Police, and DWP.
- ◆ We are part of the Kent and Medway Information Sharing Agreement, which provides a unified approach to sharing data between local public services.

Opportunities offered by technology

- ◆ Our Digital, Data and Technology Strategy promotes the use of new technologies to move away from single, large, expensive applications and systems.
- ◆ Using low code solutions, such as the Microsoft Power Platform, to apply consistent, reusable service patterns across the organisation.
- ◆ These improvements have built solid foundations to make intelligence led decisions around AI and machine learning.



THEME 3

OUR PLANS TO REDUCE WASTEFUL SPEND

How we identify and reduce waste

- ◆ The council has dedicated Business Change team that works with services to map current processes and identify areas for improvement.
- ◆ A 'road map' to review each of the council's services and redesign end to end processes is to be agreed by Cabinet in July 2024.

'Invest to save'

- ◆ 'Care for Medway' is a new project to deliver in-house residential care for adults in Medway.
- ◆ CareCubed – a system that allow Adult Social Care to negotiate the best value from residential placements.
- ◆ Smart parking solutions – investment was made into ANPR systems to ensure 100% compliance and reduce the need for Civil Enforcement Officers to visit car parks.
- ◆ Road temperature sensors – a network of sensors was installed in the roads across Medway, to allow decisions on whether to grit the road network were made using actual data.
- ◆ In-house residential provision for children on care was created at Eden Place.
- ◆ Pre-Wetted Salt –converting road gritters to use pre-wetted salt, which is much more efficient than the normal salt.

Reducing reliance on agency staff

- ◆ The Workforce Strategy agreed by Cabinet in June 2024 has been developed to improve recruitment and retention and ensure that we develop and reward our staff effectively and fairly. This in itself should reduce reliance on agency staff.
- ◆ The council is reviewing MedPay, the local salary scales to ensure that each profession has a clear progression framework and that pay is benchmarked and consistent with the market.



Ensuring accountability over spend

- ◆ All discussions in respect of the budget, particularly with portfolio holders, are led by the relevant Directors, but supported by Finance Business Partners.
- ◆ Budget monitoring has moved from quarterly to monthly and the system improved to make this slicker.
- ◆ Savings plans are monitored fortnightly through CMT discussion as part of the FIT Plan monitoring process and then triangulated with the budget monitoring.
- ◆ £1.0million of additional resources has been added to the strategic support services, primarily Finance and HR to better support the organisation.

Our shared services

- ◆ The Audit and Counter Fraud Service with Gravesham Borough Council.
- ◆ The STG Building Control Partnership with other Kent local authorities.
- ◆ Shared Legal Services with Gravesham Borough Council.



THEME 4

BARRIERS PREVENTING PROGRESS

The barriers to improved productivity and service improvement are the same across all local authority services and are largely financial. This is what the sector needs from the Government:

- Expedite the long-overdue funding review, underpinned by an updated assessment of relative needs, so that resources are allocated across the sector more fairly.
- Reintroduce multi-year financial settlements to enable better longer-term planning.
- Provide greater flexibility over local taxation, by removing the referendum limits.
- Less ring-fencing of Government grants to give greater flexibility to respond to local pressures and priorities and greater clarity over carry forward and claw back provisions.
- Continue to support local authorities with 'exceptional financial support'
- Revisit the decision to discontinue a number of important grants – Household Support Fund, Rough Sleepers etc.
- Allow greater freedoms over the use of capital sources of funding.
- Intervene in the private sector market for Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Temporary Accommodation."
- Review the benefit subsidy regime in respect of unregistered supported accommodation.
- Clarity over government policy and direction would enable spending to be more strategically effective.
- Reducing the burden in terms of Government returns.
- Moving away from a bidding approach to grant funding, as councils do not have the resources to compete with each other for funding.
- Engage more meaningfully to fully understand the issues that all local authorities are facing, but also to work with the sector to identify solutions.



- Ensure that legislation remains current and reflective of the changing environment.
- Recognise that the pressure on the NHS will only be resolved by investing more funding in public health to support prevention and improve longer term health and wellbeing and in adult social care to facilitate more effective discharge and support people to remain independently at home for longer.
- Implement the recommendations included in the MacAlister review of children's social care, but...
 - ...in the meantime, provide funding to address overspends in children's services, until the necessary reforms are made.
 - Allow flexibility to set fees and charges to ensure that services operate on a true cost-recovery basis, without having to further subsidise them.
 - Increased enforcement powers over street-works.
 - In addition, allowing local authorities to increase the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rate for temporary accommodation to reflect current rates would help to reduce the significant financial shortfall that all local authorities are facing.



MEDWAY