

# Productivity Plan 2024/25

Owner: Service Director Corporate

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## About Chesterfield Borough Council

Chesterfield is a borough council in a two-tier area with seven other district councils and Derbyshire County Council. The Council has 40 elected members serving 16 wards and a population of 103,600 (Census 2021).

We provide over 50 services to our residents for a Band D Council Tax of £190.81 – the second lowest in Derbyshire. Whilst the majority of our services are provided in-house, we also have a range of partnership and outsourced provision, with public/public partnership provision for Building Control and Internal Audit and public/private partnership provision for waste and recycling services with Veolia.

Alongside the standard district/borough council services we have worked hard to sustain key assets and facilities for the benefit of our residents, visitors, and businesses despite the challenging financial circumstances. These include:

- Our housing service which provides landlord services to just under 9000 households in the Borough (over 20% of the borough's housing stock)
- An industrial and commercial property portfolio worth over £130 million
- Three innovation centres and incubator offices to support new start-ups with on-site business and innovation advice and support
- Our two sports centres Queen's Park Sports Centre and the Staveley Healthy Living Centre, alongside other sports pitches/facilities, and green gyms
- Our award-winning parks and open spaces
- The Winding Wheel Theatre
- Stephenson Memorial Hall – home of the Pomegranate Theatre and Chesterfield Museum
- Chesterfield's outdoor markets, Market Hall, and Assembly Rooms

## Productivity Plan 2024/25

This plan has been developed using the themes and questions outlined in the 'Productivity in Local Government' letter from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities sent to Chief Executives on 16 April 2024.

## Section 1: How you have transformed the way you design and deliver services to make better use of resources

- 1.1 Like the majority of local authorities, Chesterfield Borough Council has faced and continues to face significant financial challenges. The sustained period of austerity since 2010, the ongoing risks and uncertainties over future funding arrangements, the budgetary impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and a sustained period of exceptionally high inflation have all impacted on the Council's financial position.
- 1.2 Since 2010 reducing costs, increasing income, and improving productivity have been at the heart of our activities in order to maintain a balanced budget and continue to provide essential services to our communities. Key activities systematically undertaken include:
- Robust performance management of services and budgets
  - A focus on digital innovation to drive efficiencies
  - Securing and maximising the use of external grant funding
  - Invest to save initiatives / exploiting new income generation opportunities
  - Robust asset management, with a specific focus on consolidation and rationalisation of operational assets
  - Council wide service reshapes and management and staffing restructures, vacancy control measures and voluntary early retirement / redundancy schemes
  - Introduction of new ways of working post the pandemic to optimise the value of hybrid working and digital enablement
  - Corporate budget challenge sessions to draw out emerging risks and pressures and develop proposals to remove non-priority and non-essential spending.
- 1.3 In July 2023, Full Council approved a new Budget Strategy which sets out a strategic, productivity-based approach to ensuring that Chesterfield Borough Council continues to maintain financial sustainability whilst prioritising the delivery of essential services to its communities. The key themes are:
- 1.3.1 Identifying General Efficiencies

All budget holders review their budgets on a monthly basis to identify pay and non-pay savings / income gains that can be achieved without significant detriment to service delivery e.g., removal of long-term vacant posts, revisiting

procurement processes, optimising the availability and use of external grant sources and reducing spend on supplies and services.

### 1.3.2 Increasing Income and Establishing Stronger Commercial Operating Principles

The Council aims to deliver all its services as efficiently and effectively as possible, embedding commercial operating principles to how budgets are set and managed. As well as minimising costs and waste, the priority is also to maximise income generation opportunities.

Fees and charges are reviewed regularly to ensure that wherever possible the costs of service delivery are recovered, and that there is no cross subsidy from other service areas. This is particularly important for areas of discretionary spend, where the council does not have a statutory responsibility to deliver the service. We also recognise that there are a range of different factors to consider in setting fees and charges including legislative requirements and constraints, the fees and charges levied by comparator councils and other organisations for delivering the same services, and the importance of concessionary fees and charges being available to encourage take-up and participation

Through its ICT Strategy and ICT Improvement Programme, the Council also routinely takes advantage of new technologies to enable new ways of working, enhance service performance and drive cultural change, drawing on learning from other councils, the wider public sector and beyond.

### 1.3.3 Reducing Service Offers / Stop Doing – Statutory and Non-Statutory Services

The Council takes a systematic approach to reviewing the value of the services that it provides and is not averse to making difficult decisions in relation to reducing or stopping the delivery of non-statutory services. Alternative delivery models are also routinely explored.

### 1.3.4 Right-sizing the Organisation

A review of all vacant posts has recently been conducted and 12 long-standing vacancies removed from the establishment. A Voluntary Early Retirement and Voluntary Redundancy scheme during 2023/24 enabled employees to voluntarily leave the Council. This exercise also provided the opportunity to consider whether cashable savings proposals relating to other budget themes e.g. stopping a service, might be more readily achieved by releasing employees on voluntary terms from the Council's employment.

### 1.3.5 Asset Rationalisation and Effective Asset Management

The Council agreed a new Asset Management Strategy in July 2023 and Delivery Plan in March 2024, which provide an overview of the Council's current land and property holdings, considers the key drivers and opportunities, and sets out our vision, policies and strategic objectives to direct how the Council should best manage the portfolio over the next four years. It is also important that we maintain a focus on optimising the value of our operational and non-operational (commercial) estate including rationalising the estate where there is a sound business case to do so. This will result in reduced operating expenses e.g., energy use, business rates etc., lower repair and maintenance costs, and opportunities to generate capital receipts or additional revenue through sale or lease arrangements. The overarching principle is that all Council assets should support a strategic need or offer a net financial return.

1.4 The Council employs a range of improvement tools to ensure our services offer value for money and we can evidence productivity. We actively engage with the Local Government Association sector led improvement offer including exposing our own organisation to regular peer challenges and encouraging our elected members and officers to act as peers when other councils are exposed to the offer. LG inform, APSE, Housemark and OFLOG's data explorer are also used for benchmarking the council's services to check and challenge performance and to learn from high performing authorities.

1.5 The Council's performance management framework includes quarterly challenge sessions involving the Corporate Leadership Team and relevant portfolio holder – rising to monthly challenge sessions if performance management issues are identified. The Council's performance is also scrutinised on a half yearly basis by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet. Our performance management framework aims to:

- Improve services to and outcomes for our communities
- Identify and rectify poor performance at an early stage
- Ensure the right information reaches the right people at the right time so that effective decisions are made, and action taken
- Enable evaluation, review and learning to help improve future performance
- Ensure everyone is clear about their individual roles and accountable for playing their part in delivering the Council's vision and priorities, and the Council Plan 2023 to 2027
- Demonstrate success and value for money

- Motivate and engage employees to prioritise service performance whilst recognising the need to allocate diminishing resources effectively.
- 1.6 Our 'valuing individual performance' scheme ensures that all employees have a quarterly meeting with their line manager to review their performance against the objectives agreed with them for the previous quarter and to reset their objectives for the next quarter (if needed). It is also a great opportunity for the line manager and employee to consider the employee's personal development needs and discuss ideas for service improvement. This process is supported by regular team meetings.
- 1.7 Chesterfield is a great place to live, work, visit and invest and we want all our communities to share in the benefits of Chesterfield's success, enjoying healthy and active lives. In recent years we have experienced increased demand for our services, helped more residents with more complex needs, and supported our communities through a global pandemic and cost of living crisis whilst simultaneously experiencing significant restraint on the funding available to the local government sector. We have responded positively to these challenges with greater efficiency, innovation, and creativity, as evidenced through the following examples:
- We have invested in technology and continue to encourage our communities to interact with us using digital access channels. Over 52,000 residents and businesses use our customer portal. Our high-volume customer processes are available online, and our digital channels are well used, often reaching 70% of residents and businesses using this method to interact with us
  - We have reviewed how we use our property assets and have recently relocated our Customer Service Centre facilities into Chesterfield Town Hall. This has enabled our communities to access a much wider range of public services under one roof, enabled increased customer opening hours at a reduced operational cost and has enabled the Council to achieve a reduction in energy emissions. This change has enabled us to avoid property maintenance costs of just under £1m and has generated annual revenue savings of £147,309 and is estimated to generate a capital receipt of around £600,000 following sale of the building
  - Since 2019 we have negotiated local labour clauses on all eligible developments, enabling local residents to benefit from the proceeds of growth. This typically means an extra 1,000 job roles, 40 new apprenticeships and in excess of £30million in local supply chain spend in any given year.

- We have invested significantly in our housing stock, to ensure the government's decent homes standard is maintained and that our homes are safe and 100% compliant with building safety legislation, and the standards prescribed by the Regulator of Social Housing. Between 2019 and 2023 the council invested £82 million in its housing stock, and over the next four years this will rise to £117 million. As well as ensuring our existing homes achieve the highest possible standards, the council is also building and purchasing new homes to meet local housing demand.
- During 2023/24 we carried out a range of decarbonisation improvements to council homes, making them warmer and reducing our tenants' energy bills. For example – we invested £1.6m to replace windows and doors (215 doors and windows for 113 homes), £657,000 on new roofs (84 homes), and £1.6m on heating upgrades (295 homes).
- We have committed to achieving an EPC rating of A in all new-build council housing. There are currently 40 new-build council homes either already under construction or in the pipeline for construction in the next 12 months.
- During 2023/24 we successfully distributed £770,000 of external grant funding to support upgrades to the least efficient private sector homes within Chesterfield borough. Work to date has resulted in an estimated saving of around 84,226 kWh of mains gas, and 8,742 kWh of electricity, and a reduction in emissions of around 17 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e.
- Major adaptations were completed to 171 council homes in 2023/24 at a cost of £827,700. Installations included level access showers and ramps. In addition, 330 minor adaptations (e.g., grab rails and stair rails) were completed costing £86,724 in the same period – helping people to remain living independently in their homes and reducing demand for NHS and social care services.
- We routinely teach around 2,900 children to swim each year, enable over 1,300 people to access exercise referral classes, and engage hundreds of vulnerable residents in specially developed, supportive exercise environments including our outswimming cancer and dancing with dementia programmes.



- 1.8 The table below identifies the transformation activity planned for 2024/25 and the efficiency savings / additional income levels expected:

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Efficiency saving / income generated</b>
Streamline the council's customer service operations to provide one single customer service centre within the Town Hall	£147,309 annual saving plus potential capital receipt of £600k via asset rationalisation
Streamline and move to a digital platform the council's tourist information services	£38,000 annual saving
Implement changes to working practices and rotas for the council's caretaking team	£10,595 annual saving
Work with our private sector delivery partner to review household waste recycling operations to deliver efficiency gains and reduce costs	£100,000 annual saving
Introduce easier payment arrangements for car park users	£29,000 annual saving
Reshape the council's outdoor markets and market hall service operation	£30,000 annual saving
Adopt a more commercial approach to the delivery of leisure services and the setting of fees and charges	£348,000 additional annual income
Enable community and voluntary sector partnership arrangements to support the future maintenance of outdoor leisure and recreation facilities	£20,000 annual saving
Introduce a new charge for the collection of green waste	£200,000 - £400,000 additional annual income
Reshape the management and staffing arrangements for the council's leisure centres and cultural venues	£352,000 annual saving
Digitalise the Council's newspaper	£27,000 annual saving
Reshape the council's CCTV operation	£80,000 annual saving
Implement a voluntary redundancy / voluntary early retirement scheme	£200,000 annual saving

Further work is being undertaken to develop further transformation plans for 2025/26 and beyond.

- 1.9 We have identified Housing Property Services (HPS) as a key focus area for improved customer experience and productivity gains. The main drivers for the transformation programme are:
- Improved customer care
  - Efficiency savings
  - Long term viability to protect jobs and front-line services
  - Compliance with regulatory requirements

Key elements of the transformation programme include:

1.9.1 Reshape of management team and office functions

We need to ensure that HPS's managers are equipped with the right skills to ensure that all the component functions are delivered in the most efficient and effective way. This includes placing more emphasis on commercial and financial management, customer care and complaints handling.

1.9.2 Training for supervisors and team leaders

A training programme is currently being delivered to improve consistency of supervision of and ensure professional, effective, and supportive line management for HPS's 143 trade employees.

1.9.3 Value for money

Assessments are actively being undertaken to judge the value for money of a range of HPS functions including repairs and maintenance, voids, and safety and compliance as well as the standards of performance of the supporting stores and fleet management operations. A recently completed review of the stores operation demonstrated high levels of value for money, when compared to alternative outsourced models, with a strong recommendation to continue with the existing in-house provision, subject to ongoing market-testing.

1.9.4 Trades workforce for the future

We are also undertaking a fundamental review of the red book terms and conditions that apply to HPS staff, reviewing job descriptions and looking at investment in skills to enable multi-skilling to complement main trade

specialisms. The key driver is to complete as many repairs as possible in one visit and improve customer experience, as well as providing development opportunities and better job satisfaction for the trades workforce.

#### 1.9.5 ICT and technology

A Dynamic Resource Scheduler (DRS) ICT system is to be introduced to enable HPS staff to respond more quickly to emergency and urgent repairs, reduce travel time and be better organised.

1.10 The Council is investing in decarbonisation activity to deliver on our stated ambition of becoming a carbon neutral council by 2030 and borough by 2050. The examples below show case the types of activity we are already undertaking to decarbonise but also to invest in training to ensure our staff have the skills, knowledge, and access to technology they need to enable them to optimise the benefits of decarbonisation to our communities.

##### 1.10.1 Shared heating schemes

Brocklehurst Court is one of the Council's independent living schemes and during 2024/25 we will be installing a low carbon heat source to decarbonise the shared domestic heating system that currently heats the scheme. This will reduce emissions and also improve the quality of housing. On the back of the learning gained, the Council then plans to roll out the same decarbonisation solution to the remaining five council sites with shared domestic heating systems by 2030.

##### 1.10.2 Developing retrofit skills

A programme of retrofit training for our in-house trades staff is currently being developed to help implement the Council's housing stock decarbonisation plans.

But to achieve our carbon neutral borough ambitions by 2025 we need to ensure retrofit and green technology skills are at the heart of the Skills Action Plan for the whole borough and not just the Council. This is why we are supporting the development of the Construction Skills Hub. The Hub is an on-site construction training facility situated at the heart of an existing residential development site, funded through the Staveley Town Deal. The first cohort of learners started in October 2023, based at Chesterfield College. Initially the Construction Skills Hub is providing training in site and bench joinery

brickwork, ground works and electrical installation as well as in retrofit and green technologies.

We are also coordinating a number of UK Shared Prosperity Fund projects that support the development of retrofit and green technology skills including: the Future Skills Development Fund and Green Digital Retrofit Skills Programme. The Council is also playing a key role alongside other local authority partners with a regional bid to the Local Area Retrofit Accelerator pilot programme.

### 1.10.3 Decarbonising our fleet

In July 2023, the Council approved a fleet decarbonisation plan to move away from the use of petrol and diesel fuel. 34 electric vehicles have been ordered and will be in use by summer 2024, with the remaining vehicles to be replaced by 2030. We are currently piloting a new solution for our largest and heaviest vehicle – a road sweeper. The Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) pilot is due to report back in the autumn and will provide the Council with vital information to potentially accelerate decarbonisation of more challenging vehicle types.

- 1.11 Capital investment has also been a critical part of our strategy to maintain a sustainable medium-term financial position and to continue to invest in high quality public services. We have a strong track record of attracting external capital investment and deploying capital receipts and prudential borrowing to expand our £130 million commercial property portfolio and seize opportunities for income generation, which in turn supports our core service provision. Two recent examples are detailed below:

#### 1.11.1 One Waterside Place

In November 2022, we opened One Waterside Place – providing 35,000 sq. ft. of Grade A, large floorplate office accommodation. The building has been designed with sustainability in mind, boasting a BREEAM score of Very Good and an EPC A rating for its energy performance. Less than 12 months after completion, One Waterside Place was fully let. Its proximity to the town centre and train station has been a major draw with a mix of new businesses to Chesterfield and established local businesses occupying the seven floors. Approximately 250 jobs have been secured or created in the borough as a result of the One Waterside Place development and a net annual income of approximately £450k achieved.

### 1.11.2 Northern Gateway Enterprise Centre

In June 2023 we opened the Northern Gateway Enterprise Centre. The new Centre builds on the success of Enterprise Chesterfield, that includes the Council's Dunston and Tapton Innovation Centres, which for many years have offered excellent advice, support, and accommodation to new start-up and growing businesses. The Northern Gateway Enterprise Centre is currently 85% occupied with 180 jobs secured or created and a net annual income of approximately £140k achieved.

1.12 We have also sought to invest in preventative measures to reduce costs to the council and key partners such as Derbyshire County Council and the NHS further down the line. Some key examples include:

#### 1.12.1 Derbyshire Law Centre – Housing Disrepair Advice Service

In many areas including Chesterfield borough claims management companies encourage tenants to make compensation claims and then sell these claims on to a legal firm for their own gain. If successful the legal firm will take a substantial amount of any damages the council agrees to pay, in addition to any legal costs, leaving tenants with only a part of the money paid out in damages. The Council is therefore working in partnership with Derbyshire Law Centre to encourage tenants to contact the Council first if they have any repair issues they wish to discuss, rather than starting a costly legal process and if they do need legal advice to contact Derbyshire Law Centre, where they will not be charged for legal advice. This is known as the 'Housing Disrepair Advice Service. In the first year of operation, Derbyshire Law Centre represented 50 tenants. Where financial compensation was issued, the tenant received 100% of that compensation.

#### 1.12.2 Careline

Our Careline service provides a 24/7 alarm monitoring and response service to elderly and vulnerable residents, providing peace of mind and a rapid response to falls and requests for assistance. The service helps people to live independently in their homes for longer, thus reducing the number of people requiring residential and nursing care and leading to major savings for adult social care services and the NHS. Careline received 88,096 alarm calls and attended 3,990 callouts during 2023/24.

Our Careline service works in partnership with Derbyshire County Council (DCC), the NHS, and East Midlands Ambulance Service on a pilot project to help

reduce pressure on the ambulance service. Trained Careline staff attend to make basic medical observations of patients triaged by the ambulance service via a Local Access Point team. As Careline attend at least 2,500 falls every year, and the cost to the ambulance service was estimated at £252 per fall in 2020, this suggests that Careline's services contribute to savings of at least £630,000 to the NHS. This is before taking into account an additional £160 cost if the resident is taken into A&E and a further £303 if an overnight stay in hospital is required.

### 1.12.3 Homelessness

During 2023/24, the Council dealt with 1590 homelessness presentations with 347 triggering the Council's legal duty to prevent or relieve homelessness. Homelessness was successfully prevented or relieved in 82.5 % of the 347 cases.

- 1.13 Locally, the Council has led on a number of initiatives that have helped to secure high quality public services, enhance service resilience and improve the Council's overall financial sustainability. Some key examples include:

#### 1.13.1 Derbyshire building control partnership

Building control services at individual Derbyshire councils faced significant challenges with recruitment and retention and an ageing workforce, as a result of competitor activity from the independent sector. Chesterfield led on the formation of the Derbyshire Building Control Partnership company which now represents eight councils and is viewed both nationally and regionally as a successful commercial model for the delivery of building control services. The new company started trading in 2017 and pooled the building control staffing and capabilities of six councils within a single organisation. This helped to establish a more commercially minded organisation whilst still enabling the individual councils to meet their regulatory responsibilities. Since then, two other councils have joined the partnership.

The Partnership now consistently returns annual dividends to its eight member councils and overall has reduced the cost of delivering local authority building control services by 65% when compared with the position in 2017 (when the eight councils operated their own building control services). The Partnership has consolidated its position in the market, raised quality standards and has cemented its resilience through investing in the training of new building control apprentices and trainees. Prior to the company's formation there were no

employees between the ages of 20 and 30 in local authority building control services across Derby and Derbyshire. There are now 8 employees between the ages of 19 and 30 at different stages of development. Chesterfield Borough Council continues to play a significant role in the company, leading the shareholder group and company board.

#### 1.14.2 Chesterfield and district crematorium

The Chesterfield and District Joint Crematorium sits within a 20-acre, green flag award winning public open space. The Crematorium is managed by Chesterfield Borough Council on behalf of Bolsover District Council and North East Derbyshire District Council. This long-standing partnership arrangement has led to a high quality, responsive and financially sustainable crematorium facility for residents in a catchment area serving over 300,000 people. Chesterfield and District Joint Crematorium undertakes over 2,000 cremations per year. Over the next few years, the partner councils plan to make significant capital investments in climate change initiatives, in decarbonising the Crematorium itself and in seeking to offer alternatives such as green burials.

## **Section 2: How you plan to take advantage of technology and make better use of data to improve decision making, service design and use of resources.**

- 2.1 We continue to implement projects that enable us to replace our legacy ICT systems. This year the programme of work focuses on replacement of systems that are built on outdated technology platforms or infrastructure and which will enable us to address the heightened risks from security vulnerabilities which are more prevalent in older technology.
- 2.2 We have recently invested in integration technology which will help us to join our systems together more effectively and efficiently. This approach will enable us to achieve accurate data exchanges and process automation and remove the data silos and the need for manual data entry that exists in some of our legacy systems.
- 2.3 We are using a digital platform which is underpinned by Salesforce technology to support our digital transformation activity. This provides us with flexibility and scalability to adapt to changing business requirements and allows us to incorporate new functionality far easier than is available in our legacy systems,

which are often difficult to scale, modify or upgrade at pace. We have recently been able to respond to a wide variety of new burdens grant requirements quickly and easily using our digital platform.

- 2.4 The ICT Service is focused on the governance, architecture, and quality of our data and data analytics and insights are being generated using Power BI tools, which are helping us to make data driven decisions. Predictive analytics are being implemented within our Revenues Service during 2024 and we expect this technology will improve productivity levels within the Revenues Service and improve our ability to collect income efficiently.
- 2.5 The Council is already using robotics process automation in Revenues and Benefits services, realising efficiencies which are equivalent to 2.5 full time equivalent staff members and we will continue to develop use of robotics across the organisation to improve our efficiency levels.
- 2.6 We recognise that there are significant opportunities to use data more effectively to improve decision making, service design and delivery and increase efficiency. This is a key area of focus for us, and we have seen performance improvement in key areas as a result. For example, our Housing service collects and monitors data on a range of key performance measures. These are scrutinised at our monthly Strategic Housing Board, allowing early intervention to address any performance issues.
- 2.7 This approach has been particularly valuable for key landlord compliance and safety measures including asbestos, electrical, gas, lifts, water and fire safety. Where concerns are raised or performance drops below 100% compliance, actions are identified to ensure any issues are immediately addressed. We also use LG inform, APSE, Housemark and OFLOG's data explorer to benchmark key council services and enable check, challenge and service improvements. This benchmarking data is regularly considered by the Corporate Leadership Team and portfolio holders to ensure we are able to learn from the best performing organisations and implement improvement strategies.
- 2.8 We have a number of data sharing agreements in place with a range of external organisations which help us to maximise positive outcomes for local residents. Some key examples include:



### 2.8.1 Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults

We have data sharing agreements in place with all partners that make up the Derby and Derbyshire Safeguarding Children Partnership and the Derbyshire Safeguarding Adults Partnership. These agreements enable data to be shared regarding safeguarding concerns, agency knowledge and interactions for a range of scenarios including current safeguarding activity relating to the prevention of harm, trend analysis to enable preventative action and resource allocation and the completion of serious case reviews and domestic homicide reviews.

### 2.8.2 ASB tasking

We have developed a strong partnership response to combatting and preventing anti-social behaviour within our communities. At the heart of our multi-agency tasking is the need to gather and share intelligence and data to enable co-ordinated action in relation to early intervention and prevention, enforcement, diversionary activities and improved communication and engagement.

## **Section 3: Your plans to reduce wasteful spend within your organisation and systems**

- 3.1 We have robust financial procedures in place within the constitution, which are followed - [Part 4 Rules of Procedure \(chesterfield.gov.uk\)](http://chesterfield.gov.uk). Clear financial approval limits are also in place within the financial management system.
- 3.2 Effective budget management and control are key elements of the Council's budget strategy. All budget holders review their budgets on a monthly basis (line by line) to identify savings and income gains. Where there are no impacts or limited impacts on service delivery and other key factors such as staffing, these can be taken forward at pace and efficiencies achieved quickly.
- 3.3 Our Valuing Individual Performance (VIP) employee performance management approach also offers the opportunity for regular one to ones and team meetings where productivity, savings and income generation opportunities are routinely raised by employees.
- 3.4 As part of our quarterly budget monitoring cycle we also horizon scan to identify emerging resource pressures and risks, and also scope out larger or

more complex efficiency savings or income generation opportunities that may have two – four-year lead-in times.

- 3.5 Regular budget challenge sessions are held with the finance team, the corporate leadership team and with portfolio holders. The appropriate decision-making route can then be developed.
- 3.6 We have invested in technology improvements which have enabled us to achieve over £3m of revenue savings through digital transformation in our customer facing services during the last four years and this work will realise over £1.1m of ongoing recurring annual revenue savings.
- 3.7 We spent approximately 1% of our general fund pay bill on agency and interim resources last year. We use agency or interim staff when there is a need to fill posts urgently in order to maintain statutory service delivery and where there are significant recruitment challenges within service areas. None of the agency or interim staff have been in post for over a year. Approximately 1% of the general fund pay bill was also spent on consultancy. A significant proportion of this spend related to ICT consultancy, where specific technology skills were needed for short periods of time and this is not expected to continue. We procure using approved frameworks or undertake specific procurement exercises to ensure value for money is achieved.
- 3.8 Effective joint working with the Trade Unions has the potential to produce benefits for our workforce and our communities, including better services, more effective policy implementation, higher standards of employment practices and reduced employee sickness absence.
- 3.9 The Council first signed a partnership agreement with recognised Trade Unions in 2020. The document sets out a framework for working with Trade Union representatives, so that good formal and informal working relationships are maintained. The agreement recognises the essential role that Trade Unions play in ensuring our employees are supported, advised, represented, and consulted on change and sets out our commitment to engage with Trade Unions and with the workforce over important decisions that impact on their roles at the Council. In 2023/24 trade union facility equated to 0.17% of the paybill.
- 3.10 We have recently worked with local Trade Union representatives to review and refresh the Trade Union partnership agreement and facility time arrangements to ensure they reflect the size and scale of transformation activity taking place

within the authority and our desire to accelerate progress, without losing the value that effective employee engagement brings. We have agreed to increase facility time to a maximum of 0.28% of the pay bill. This will be reviewed annually.

- 3.11 We are committed to meeting the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty. All employees complete an equality and diversity online learning module when they join Chesterfield Borough Council. The module takes around 45 minutes to complete and focusses on our responsibilities under the afore-mentioned Act and Duty. Employees repeat the module (updated) every three years.
- 3.12 Employees who work in front line roles that are more likely to come into contact with people with protected characteristics receive more specialised equality and diversity related training. For example, employees that interact regularly with children and vulnerable adults recently attended specialist safeguarding training where the focus was on supporting people with neuro-divergent conditions. This training need was identified by several Derbyshire Borough / District Councils at the Derbyshire Districts Safeguarding Group (sub board of the Derby and Derbyshire Safeguarding Children Partnership and Derbyshire Safeguarding Adults Board). Officers were reporting an increase in the number and complexity of neurodivergent conditions including ADHD and autism being disclosed to them by residents that they were supporting.
- 3.13 A partnership approach to the provision of the training was agreed, with Derbyshire County Council taking the lead. The training helped to increase knowledge of neuro-diversity and provided 60 of our employees with tools and techniques which they could use to help support and engage residents. This was a half day investment in the Council's staff but with significant longer term benefits in terms of reducing escalation to statutory safeguarding levels and burden on other agencies such as Derbyshire County Council, the Police and NHS e.g., reducing the need for costly medication and advocacy.
- 3.14 The vast majority of equality, diversity and inclusion training is sourced at no cost via partnership arrangements, sector support agencies (Local Government Association, District Councils Network, East Midlands Councils) and government briefings. The amount of hours spent on specialist equality, diversity and inclusion training varies from year to year but in 2023/24 the number of hours was recorded at 204 officer hours, but all provided at no financial cost. Information on training needs and the effectiveness of provision is captured via

the valuing individual performance employee performance management scheme.

- 3.15 We also work with local community groups, partners, and individuals to promote equality, share ideas, and raise awareness of equality and diversity via the community led Chesterfield Equality and Diversity Forum. Each year, the Forum organises a number of public events and training sessions to raise awareness of local equality issues and celebrate diversity. The key activities for 2023/24 included mental health awareness, hidden disabilities, Holocaust Memorial Day, and International Women's Day. The contribution from Chesterfield Borough Council to the Equality and Diversity Forum is £2,000 per annum to support events and activities. This is matched by partnership contributions including financial and in-kind support from other agencies such as Chesterfield College, Derbyshire County Council and Derbyshire Police on an event-by-event basis.
- 3.16 While the majority of our services are provided in-house we do have a number of shared services and partnership arrangements. We have a successful Internal Audit shared service (Chesterfield Borough Council is the host authority) with Bolsover District Council, North East Derbyshire District Council and provide some management support via the shared service to Derbyshire Dales District Council. The shared service has helped to reduce management costs, improve career pathways, and recruit and retain employees given the breadth of work and experience available across the four councils.
- 3.17 Chesterfield Borough Council also provides a range of Revenues and Benefits services on behalf of Derbyshire Dales District Council. This approach utilises the skills, experience, systems etc. of Chesterfield Borough Council to provide high quality services to Derbyshire Dales residents and provides an annual income to Chesterfield Borough Council – helping to make our services more sustainable. This is an area we feel could be expanded in the future.
- 3.18 We also use a partnership approach to accessing learning and development opportunities. Examples include safeguarding and community safety, where we utilise the skills and knowledge of different agencies to support each other.
- 3.19 Chesterfield Borough Council has also sought to maximise the positive opportunities that arise from Government devolution. The Council played an important role in Sheffield City Region, making a significant contribution to the running of the Combined Authority over many years and also benefitting from capital grant funding for infrastructure to support economic growth. The

Council received multiple allocations of grant funding to the value of £10.5m and secured Enterprise Zone status for the Markham Vale development, which is now home to 2,000 plus employees.

- 3.20 In May 2024 the electorate of Derby, Derbyshire, Nottingham, Nottinghamshire elected a Mayor for the East Midlands, and the East Midlands Combined County Authority has now been established. The Council is already actively engaging in the development of the new authority and mayoral priorities, however this is still at an early stage, and we will be able to answer this question in full as part of our next productivity plan.

## **Section 4: The barriers preventing progress that the Government can help to reduce or remove**

- 4.1 Reform of local government funding is required to ensure that we move away from single year, late notification settlements which do not support us to make medium- and long-term decisions around investment in services and measures to improve productivity. The review needs to consider our statutory duties, demand pressures, and accurately assess the level of new burdens funding needed when we are asked to provide new services. We also strongly believe the Government should move away from its current short notice competitive bidding approach to allocating capital funds for economic growth.
- 4.2 The current costly and fragmented funding regime means that the Council is spending significant sums of revenue funding annually on researching Westminster and Whitehall funding streams, developing speculative bids and getting to grips with increasingly complex monitoring regimes in order to deliver for our communities. In some cases, the funding streams and policies are in direct competition with each other for example resettlement schemes competing against asylum dispersal schemes. This is inefficient and often unfair.
- 4.3 If Government were to properly invest in local government on a multi-year settlement basis and ensure that councils have the resources they need to prioritise preventative action as part of their daily delivery of public services, Chesterfield Borough Council would be better able to reduce current and future burdens on the NHS, Police, Fire and Social Care services, build community resilience and support inclusive growth.

## Section 5: Monitoring of the Productivity Plan

- 5.1 Productivity plan monitoring will be undertaken via the Council's Performance Management Framework, with regular check and challenge via and portfolio holders and twice-yearly challenge via the council's Scrutiny Committees and Cabinet.