



Cabinet

Item
8(i)

5 June 2024

Report of	Chief Operating Officer	Author	Richard Block richard.block@colchester.gov.uk
Title	Council Productivity Plan		
Wards affected	All wards		

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 When the Local Government Finance Settlement was published in late 2023, there was a requirement placed on Councils to publish a Productivity Plan each year. This report brings forward the proposed approach for the Council's Productivity Plan for 2024/25

2. Recommended Decision

- 2.1 That the Productivity Plan at Appendix A, underpinned by the items listed at 2.4 in the report, be approved.

3. Reason for Recommended Decision

- 3.1 To deliver on the Government's requirement and demonstrate the Council's commitment to deliver efficiency and improved outcomes for communities.

4. Alternative Options

- 4.1 Do nothing – not an option due to the Government's requirement to publish a Productivity Plan.

5. Background Information

- 5.1 When the Local Government finance settlement for 24/25 was published in late 2023, it included a requirement for local authorities to develop and share Productivity Plans on their website. These plans, which must be published by the summer Parliamentary recess, should set out how Councils will improve service performance and become more efficient.
- 5.2 The Government has requested that the Plans should be short and draw on work councils have already done, identifying ways to unlock productivity improvements and setting out the key implementation milestones.
- 5.3 Government expects the Productivity Plans to cover four main areas:
- a. transformation of services to make better use of resources;
 - b. opportunities to take advantage of advances in technology and make better use of data to inform decision making and service design;
 - c. ways to reduce wasteful spend within systems;
 - d. barriers preventing activity that Government can help to reduce or remove.
- 5.4 This Council has a track record of driving efficiencies and productivity that was recognised in the Local Government Peer Review conducted in September 2022. Prior to the announcement of the requirement for productivity plans, preparations were well underway to develop the Council “Fit for the Future” plan which fulfils same aim as the recently announced requirement for a Productivity Plan. Fit for the Future was previously considered in detail by the Scrutiny Panel in February 2024 and was subsequently adopted by Cabinet in March 2024.
- 5.5 The performance of this Council compared to other Councils has also recently been recognised through published performance measures introduced by the Office for Local Government (OFLOG).
- 5.6 To avoid duplication and ensure the most efficient response to the requirement for a productivity plan, it is proposed that the “Fit for the Future” plan forms the basis of this Councils productivity plan. A summary is show at appendix A and it is proposed to submit this as the Council’s productivity plan.
- 5.7 Under the umbrella of North Essex Councils, a programme to collaborate and share services across Colchester City Council, Epping Forest District Council and Braintree District Council has been launched. Each Council has developed a Fit for the Future transformation plan and the 3 Councils have agreed to work collaboratively on our respective plans ensuring further efficiency and productivity.

6.0 Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

- 6.1 As changes are made to services and staffing structures through the fit for the future programme, equality and diversity implications will be assessed using individual equality impact assessments.

7. Strategic Plan References

- 7.1 ‘Fit for the Future’ will directly deliver against the Modern City Services strand of the strategic plan. When making any changes to services a key consideration of the future service provision will be contribution to all objectives of the Strategic Plan.

8. Consultation

- 8.1 Fit for the Future included a detailed communications plan which demonstrates the commitment to engage and consult with staff informally. Staff and the recognised trade union will also be consulted formally about any changes to staffing structures and roles.
- 8.2 Stakeholders and the public will also be consulted throughout using various mechanisms and existing networks including One Colchester and the Residents Panel.

9. Publicity Considerations

- 9.1 The detailed communications plan included as part of Fit for the Future demonstrates how changes will be managed.

10. Financial implications

- 10.1 'Fit for the Future' is essential to deliver budget savings required by the revised Medium Term Financial Forecast. By developing a 3-year planned strategic programme of change, savings can be delivered progressively avoiding the need for the development of new budget savings plans each year.

11. Health, Wellbeing and Community Safety Implications

- 11.1 There are no implications.

12. Environmental and Sustainability Implications

- 12.1 The implications of each programme will be carefully considered as changes to services are considered).
- 12.2 Several elements of 'Fit for the Future' have real potential to support the Council's strategic objectives relating to environmental sustainability such as the review of the waste strategy, review of our assets, and the review of the street care and greening services.

13. Health and Safety Implications

- 13.1 There are no direct health and safety implications associated with this report.

14. Risk Management Implications

- 14.1 Each programme that makes up 'Fit for the Future' will have its own risk register which in turn will feed into an overall risk register for the portfolio of activity. This will be reviewed and managed through the governance adopted previously by Cabinet.

Appendices

Appendix A – Council Productivity Plan

Background Papers

None