# Productivity Plan- Burnley Council

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

Burnley has an appetite and willingness to use all the 'levers' open to it, as well as attracting and using funds innovatively, whilst managing the associated risks, to improve outcomes for the Borough.

This is borne out of its successful management and delivery of a diverse range of economic, housing and regeneration projects and interventions, aligned with productive working relationships with central government, local partners, the private sector and funding organisations such as Homes England.

The Council also has significant experience of managing contracts with its service delivery partners and taking commercial decisions in the long-term interests of the borough. For example:

1. In 2016 the Council entered into a 10 year agreement with Liberata UK to provide Customer Services, IT, Revenues & Benefits, FM & Property Services, HR admin & Payroll, and Environmental Health & Licensing. We are achieving the original cost reduction objective. The contract price is fixed, so a 20% saving is forecast against the base costs in the final years of the initial 10-year term of the contract. Through this partnership the council also wanted to help grow and develop trading activity within Burnley: the "north shoring" of jobs. Liberata has achieved its contractual commitment to create over 100 new jobs in the borough.
2. The Council's waste, recycling and street cleansing service has been contracted out since 1995. The service has been re-procured on four separate occasions transferring successfully from contractor to contractor. The current contract with Urbaser realized an annual saving in excess of £585,000. The procurement was

handled in an innovative way. By providing detailed, concise and accurate data, uncertainties were de-risked by the contractor which helped them to offer the Council a substantial annual saving. In addition, the Council used prudential borrowing to buy the vehicles for use by the contractor. This again helped drive down the cost of the service

3. In summer 2024, the council entered a partnership with our neighbour Pendle, to jointly develop a new local Waste Transfer Station. This decision was arrived at following a detailed options appraisal, which is forecast to save the council nearly £700k over 5 years compared to the next best option
4. Having managed a reduction in direct staffing of 60% since 2010, the council has rationalised its office accommodation, saving £2.023m since 2013/14. This includes the closure of the Nicholas Street offices in 2013/14 (£1.133m) and the relocation of the Contact Centre in 2019/20 (£0.890m). The ongoing savings per annum from the closure of these offices are nearly £300,000.

## Plans to take advantage of technology

Our new Digital Strategy sets out our plans to improve decision making, service design, and resource utilisation through digital innovation. It has the following objectives:

1. Developing easy-to-use digital services designed around users' needs by continually improving our website, increasing social media engagement, making it easier for residents to report issues through apps like Love Clean Streets, deploying voicebots in customer services, improving online payments, and significantly enhancing geographical information systems so spatial data is shared efficiently.
2. Implementing smart systems that join up data, automate processes, and support data-driven decision-making. This involves upgrading customer and case management across built environment, regulatory, and streetscene services to resolve challenges such as duplicated document tasks, manual data sharing between departments, limited data sharing with the public for self-service, and the need for improved performance management.
3. The Digital Strategy is also an invest to save strategy. By consolidating the digital estate on top of time savings in staff time, we expect to save £30k p.a. on case and customer management software costs.
4. Developing staff skills through a digital change playbook, reviewing the learning and development plan, and adopting the Local Government Association's Cyber, digital, data, and technology (CDDaT) skills framework.

By focusing on high-volume or high-effort processes, requiring clear business cases before software purchases, and setting KPIs related to self-service ratios, citizen feedback, process reviews, efficiency targets, and system consolidation, Burnley Council aims to become a regional leader in delivering seamless, user-centered digital services by 2028.

## Plans to reduce wasteful spending within the council

Burnley Borough Council has approved and adopted a Code of Corporate Governance, which is consistent with the principles of the CIPFA1 /SOLACE2 “Framework Delivering Good Governance in Local Government.” The council does not waste tax payers money. Details on our corporate governance can be found be following the link below.

202324-AGS-22April24-Final-Signed.pdf (burnley.gov.uk)

The council set aside a small Transformation Reserve which will fund longer-term savings requiring an upfront cost to release them. These are identified as part of the budget setting process each year. An example of this is the Digital Strategy.

Agency costs are 1% of the overall wage bill (£110k of £10.9m). Around half of this relates to employing seasonal staff, which is cheaper than employing full-time staff.

The council has not had any consultants in its employ for a year or more.

Trade Union facility time is negligible: it equates to 0.06% of the total wage bill.

The council provides Equality & Diversity awareness training which is run every 1-2 years (depending on need) at a cost of £500. It is vital that we serve all our residents and customers equally well, so this is a small amount of money well spent.

## Barriers to progress

With limited reserves to fund transformation, the council asks that the Government increases investment in the Government Digital Service. For example, Gov.Notify and Gov.Pay  are very welcome innovations. In addition, further investment in the Local Digital Fund would help smaller councils with limited access to digital skills and budgets to transition to more innovative solutions.

Without these funding streams the council would be forced to borrow and earmark revenue resources that would take funding away from front line services. Additional borrowing would place further pressures on the revenue budget and would adversely affect Oflog metrics.

Multi-year settlements would also assist in planning for future investment or savings plans. We have recently experienced a number of one-year settlements that result in controversial savings proposals for reductions in essential front-line services being developed due to the uncertainty around funding to enable a balanced budget for the forthcoming year, especially as the provisional finance settlement is announced late in the budget setting process. This causes undue alarm and distress for those staff affected by the proposed reductions.

Delays in implementing the Fair Funding Review and Business Rates Review have caused further medium to long term budget uncertainty. For example, the Council has invested in building its business rate base and is funding the investment through the “growth” above the business rates baseline position. If the growth was due to either fully or partially disappear following a review, the Council is less likely to invest due to the uncertainty as it would be left with a gap in funding the investment.