

Productivity Plan

1. Strategic alliance

In June 2008 High Peak Borough Council and Staffordshire Moorlands District Council joined forces in a Strategic Alliance to establish joint working arrangements and create a shared approach to delivering key services.

Now in its 16th year, the strategic partnership is one of the earliest and most successful within local government; it has achieved cumulative budget savings of over £15.7m whilst continuing to deliver high performing, low cost services. The strategic alliance quickly evolved from separate workforces led by a shared Chief Executive, to the single 'Alliance' workforce that we have today, whilst still serving the separate but similar needs of two distinct geographic and political areas.

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2. Efficiency Programme

As part of its budget setting process in February 2023, the Council set in place the latest of a series of efficiency programmes designed to realise savings and generate increased value from its use of resources. Building on earlier successes, the plan was developed by a cross-service working group with input from elected members across all parties. It focused on five key areas:

- Asset management planning;
- Income and charges;
- Recruitment and retention;
- Project management; and
- Council controlled companies.

Set over a rolling 4-year period, the plan is revisited annually as part of the update of the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan and is monitored as a project via the Council's Transformation Board.

The Efficiency Programme document is included as an appendix to this Productivity Plan

3. Performance Framework

Service improvements and performance are measured under the Council's Performance Framework and reported quarterly to Overview and Scrutiny committees. Overall performance against the Authority's corporate objectives and priorities is reported each year in the Council's Annual Report.

4. Digital Strategy, Organisational Strategy, and Access to Services Strategy

Local authorities are experiencing a time of unprecedented change. We now live in a fast-paced, digitally reliant, 24/7 society that has changed the way in which our residents live and work and how and when they want and need to access our services and support. The experience of the recent pandemic has also changed the way people work, accelerating moves towards flexibility, responsiveness and agile / remote working.

In response to these challenges the Council put in place the following strategies designed to shape its continued transformation:

- Access to Services Strategy;
- Digital Strategy; and
- Organisational Development Strategy.

The strategies collectively form the basis of an Alliance-wide service review programme branded as 'Alliance: Our Future', which aims to redesign services to take full advantage of technology, whilst at the same time developing new ways to make services more intelligent and more relevant to the lives of our residents who are at the heart of the developments.

5. Barriers to Progress

All councils are hindered in their financial planning by the Government's continued reliance on single-year finance settlements. We would welcome the return of multi-year finance settlements, which would lead to greater certainty of funding and better medium-term financial planning.

We have also been hampered by the tendency of Whitehall to design and decide policy that affects councils without engaging the sector as fully and as early as it could. This has resulted in initiatives and funds that are more complicated than necessary and that are difficult and, in some cases costly, for councils to implement. We strongly support much closer policy co-design between central government and local councils.

We would also benefit from much greater flexibility for our council (and all councils) to decide how to raise and spend money locally. Central prescription and ring-fencing constrain our ability to allocate our resources effectively.

A further barrier to productivity is caused by the disproportionate amount of resource required to:

- engage with the wide range of separate one-off revenue and capital grant pots with onerous, costly and counter-productive bidding processes.
- Comply with the accounting requirements necessary to draw up a compliant set of financial statements, particularly the requirement to value assets for accounts every year.