

## **East Herts Council Non-Key Decision Report**

**Date:** 17 July 2024

**Report by:** Leader of the Council

**Report title:** East Herts Productivity Plan

**Ward(s) affected:** All

### **Summary**

- All local authorities have been required to produce Productivity Plans in response to a Written Ministerial Statement made by the then Secretary of State of the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (now Ministry of Communities, Housing and Local Government) on 5 February 2024, following the Local Government Finance Settlement for 2024-25. The Minister subsequently wrote to all local authorities setting out the themes that the Plans should cover and requiring that the Plans receive member endorsement before being returned to the Ministry by the end of July alongside publication on the relevant local authority's website. This work has continued regardless of the change of government following the 4<sup>th</sup> July election.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DECISION: That:**

**(A) The Leader of the Council agree to the content and publication of the proposed Productivity Plan.**

#### **1.0 Proposal(s)**

- 1.1 All local authorities are required to ensure their own productivity plan has member oversight and endorsement, following which the Ministry would like to have sight of them by the end of July. In order to meet this requirement it is proposed that authority is delegated to an individual Executive Member under section 4.26.3 (f) of the Council's Constitution, *'where there are implications for policies of the council, to agree responses to consultation papers from the Government'*. Given this productivity plan covers all areas of Council activity it is further proposed this authority be given to the Leader of the Council Under paragraph 4.26.6 of the

Constitution that the Leader *`may exercise any of the functions delegated to individual Executive Member.*

## **2.0 Background**

- 2.1 In a written Ministerial Statement following the Local Government Finance Settlement for 2024-25 the then Secretary of State set out the requirement for local authorities to develop and share productivity plans, with the aim that the plans "will set out how local authorities will improve service performance and reduce wasteful expenditure... Government will monitor these plans, and funding settlements in future will be informed by performance against these plans."
- 2.2 Further details made clear the expectation that each local authority's productivity plan would cover four main areas:
  - (i) transformation of services to make better use of resources
  - (ii) opportunities to take advantage of advances in technology and make better use of data to inform decision making and service design
  - (iii) ways to reduce wasteful spend within systems, including specific consideration of expenditure on consultants and discredited staff Equality, Diversity and Inclusion programme
  - (iv) barriers preventing activity that Government can help to reduce or remove.
- 2.3 All local authorities are required to ensure their own productivity plan has member endorsement, following which the Ministry requested that each local authority returns their own plan by the end of July having also made the plan available to residents via their website.
- 2.4 The Minister at the time of issuing this statement advised that individual plans will not be rated or scored. However, a panel to consider the themes and evidence from the plans would be convened which will include both the Office for Local Government and the Local Government Association. Despite the calling of the General Election since this statement was released, most local authorities have continued to work on their productivity plans on the assumption that an incoming, new minister would be interested in similar information.

- 2.5 When drafting the plan we have taken into account the firm steer from that developing the Plans should not impose an excessive burden and should be based on existing activity and plans within their local authority.
- 2.6 With that in mind the East Herts Productivity Plan provides a short narrative on our overall Transforming East Herts project, which broadly meets the information requirements set out in (2.2) and addresses the main themes the plan is meant to cover, that of overall productivity in the organisation. The Productivity Plan is attached at Appendix A. Following Member endorsement, the plan will be published on the Council's website and shared with the Ministry.

### **3.0 Reason**

- 3.1 All local authorities are required to ensure their own productivity plan has member endorsement, following which the plans will be shared with the Ministry for Communities, Housing and Local Government.

### **4.0 Options**

- 4.1 Publish the Productivity Plan
- 4.2 Do not publish the Productivity Plan. This could be pursued on the assumption of a change of government may result in this request becoming redundant. However most local authorities are continuing to produce their plans regardless.

### **5.0 Risks**

- 5.1 No direct risks associated with publishing the plan

### **6.0 Implications/Consultations**

- 6.1 None

**Community Safety**

None

**Data Protection**

No personal or sensitive data shared as part of the plan.

**Equalities**

The guidance specifically referenced using examples of spend on discredit equalities and diversity schemes however there was no further guidance on what this meant in practice. East Herts has regular training in place for all staff on the duties set out in the Equalities Act 2010 and obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty. It is not our understanding that either are discredited and therefore no example has been included. The Productivity Plan itself is an update on the Transforming East Herts Programme which has a separate equalities impact assessment.

**Environmental Sustainability**

None

**Financial**

None directly with this report however the Transforming East Herts programme sets out how the council will make significant financial savings over the lifetime of the Medium-Term Financial Plan.

**Health and Safety**

None

**Human Resources**

None

**Human Rights**

None

**Legal**

None

**Specific Wards**

No

## **7.0 Background papers, appendices and other relevant material**

### **Appendix A: Productivity Plan**

#### **Contact Member**

Councillor Ben Crystall, Leader of the Council.

[ben.crystall@eastherts.gov.uk](mailto:ben.crystall@eastherts.gov.uk)

#### **Contact Officer**

Benjamin Wood, Head of Communications, Strategy and Policy

[benjamin.wood@eastherts.gov.uk](mailto:benjamin.wood@eastherts.gov.uk), Tel: 01992 531699.