

Productivity Plan

July 2024

Our Vision

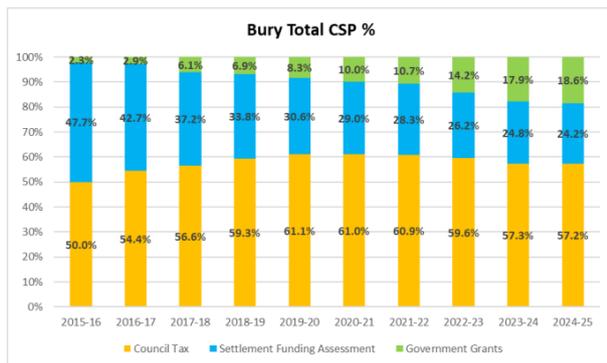
In 2020 the aspirational and ambitious LET'S Do It! Community Strategy for Bury was launched, setting out a vision for the borough through to 2030: **to stand out as a place that is achieving faster economic growth than the national average, with lower than national average levels of deprivation.** Since then, both Bury Council and the wider Team Bury Partnership have worked together to transform the collective response to public service reform and to increase focus on the seven high level outcomes committed to within the Strategy. There is now a much stronger “golden thread” that binds the collective endeavour across the partnership.

Bury is nearly three years into this decade of reform and good progress has been made. The contribution to LET'S by the Council are managed each year through a Corporate Plan which sets out the delivery and activity. For the last three years a framework of the “3Rs” within the Corporate Plan has been used to direct activity: Response; Recovery and Renewal to show that LET's Do It! did not mean “*Let's do everything*”. More recently the priorities within the Corporate Plan have been reviewed to ensure that activity is focused on the right things – to ensure productivity and efficiency – those priorities are: Sustainable Inclusive Growth, Improving Childrens Lives and Tackling Inequalities.

Financial Context

In February 2024, the latest budget statement described the wider challenging and uncertain national and local financial context in which Bury are operating. Despite recent reductions in the rate of inflation the Council is still addressing the impact of 11% inflation which has introduced circa £11m of cost pressure since 2022. In addition this has been exacerbated by ongoing increases in demand across all statutory services including social care for adults and children, special educational needs and support services, social housing and homelessness duties. Collectively these have presented a 17% demand increase on the council's budget against an income increase of 7%. Of this 7%, 57% is attributable to Council Tax. For Bury, these pressures come on top of systemic underfunding as demonstrated by the 2023 study by the Institute of Fiscal Studies which highlighted Bury Council's position in the bottom 20% worst funded councils. Real term core spending power has been reduced by 29% since 2010/11.

The diagrams below show the change in Core Spending Power for Bury since 2015-16 and the increasing reliance on Council Tax income streams. They also show the percentage increase in demand across a range of our services that have been delivered during this period of reduced funding this includes the impact of increasing population, particularly older people which increases demand on our range of services for adults over 65.



Measure	First Date Period	Last Date Period	% Demand Increase
Number of Looked After Children	2014	2023	13%
	310	350	
Referrals to Childrens Social Services	2015	2023	24%
	2622	3239	
Housing Waiting List	2015/16	2023/24	26%
	1879	2375	
Requests for EHCPs	2014	2023	297%
	174	690	
Total EHCPs or Statements	2014	2023	85%
	1213	2241	
Numbers of 2 year funded children	2014	2023	36%
	340	461	
Waste collection (tonnes) from street cleaning	2021	2023	24%
	2853	3532	
Number of potholes repaired	2021	2022	23%
	10878	13348	
Population aged 65+	2015	2022	7%
	33,413	35,758	
Funded Children - 30 Hours childcare	2017/18	2023/24	25%
	4175	5220	

In terms of the stability of the workforce to deliver services – the overall size has remained relatively stable with a 23 FTE increase between April 2022 and April 2024 – however this masks a notable change in the shape of the workforce with a 92 FTE increase in workforce across the social care departments, a 34 FTE decrease in Operations and a 74 FTE decrease across corporate functions. However sickness absence, whilst reduced over the past year remains above the sector average which may impact the ability to deliver.

Transformation

In 2021/22 the Transformation Strategy was established to deliver:

- Improved ways of working to facilitate the Council’s contribution to the delivery of the borough’s strategy, LET’S Do It! and the Council’s Corporate Plan
- Delivery of savings to support the Council’s Medium Term Financial Strategy.

The objectives were delivered through three programmes of work: LET’S Do It! ... Once, Well and Flexibly and in parallel a new digital strategy was developed to enable further transformation and efficiency. The Council has continued to set the tone for continuous improvement across the organisation. This has been in the form of rounds of service reviews, departmental restructures and improvement support through LGA peer reviews. The Council’s Corporate Peer Challenge was undertaken in November / December 2023 and recognised the work undertaken to continue the transformation of the Council and realise efficiencies over recent years. It proposed that Bury build on this by:

- Establishing a corporate transformation plan, approach, resource and culture to support delivery of the MTFP
- Further developing finance, HR and IT – including their role and the relationships they require. These services are key to enabling the delivery of the council’s transformation needs.

In the context of the need to deliver £30M in savings over the coming three years (as set out in the MTFP agreed in February 2024) the Council is progressing an

ambitious plan of transformation to drive financial saving in tandem with creating the conditions and culture to deliver on the LET'S Do It! Vision for Bury.

Expenditure

Bury Council's STAR Chamber reviews all the spend and sets budget for the financial years, agreeing the growth requirements and budget assumptions for the MTFP. This is a line-by-line review on all expenditure and staff establishments to assure all public money is not wasted and the Council is delivering a standard of service in relation to the resources available. Analysing performance against roles to identify issues in capacity, assessing value for money from staff investment.

Executive Delivery Board reviews the savings delivery for the Council and provides support in identifying one off or replacement savings where targets are undeliverable within the year and across the MTFP. Savings monitored throughout Executive Delivery Board and ongoing STAR Chamber reviews until budget is agreed as part of the constitutional budget setting process. The MTFP is reviewed quarterly and presented at the STAR Chamber meetings and Strategic Leadership Group and executive meetings.

In terms of engaging capacity to deliver any requirements for agency or consultancy activity across the Council is subject to a robust internal approval process and, to ensure transparency and be clear on outcomes, information is shared with both Members and the Councils Trade Unions through the Corporate Joint Consultative Committee (JCC). The Council engages the overwhelming majority of agency staff through a managed service provider contract which is a joint arrangement across Greater Manchester. This arrangement supports significant efficiencies through economies of scale across the Conurbation and, given the scale, dedicated contract management support is in place to ensure the quality of service and address any issues.

We have strengthened our Senior Leadership Group where the Executive and their direct reports meet on a monthly basis to discuss key issues and monitor the delivery of the Corporate Plan through a rotating agenda which focuses on Workforce, Budget, Performance. This is also where shared "wicked issues" are discussed and owned. Beneath this is a much larger Senior Management Forum consisting of staff who report directly into SLG. This group meets regularly and has been used as a key information sharing group, but also as an opportunity to deliver consistent messaging and training around corporate activities such as our new Procurement Regulations, the importance of Risk Management and improving report writing standards for our committees. We also discuss key leadership themes such as inclusion health and safety and our commitment to corporate parenting.

The Council has invested time and resource in understanding our demand and savings proposals relate to opportunities for transformation in high spend areas such as social care for children and adults. In addition, we are prioritising other activity such as estates rationalisation, investing in more energy efficient operations and ensuring we maximise income where appropriate from fees, charges and other income sources.

Monitoring Performance and Productivity

The Corporate Plan and LET'S monitoring mechanisms show that despite the challenging financial environment that delivery and productivity continue despite increasing demand and reducing funding. The suite of KPIs within the Corporate Plan reporting process continue to demonstrate the delivery of key activities. Reports are taken to Cabinet on a quarterly basis which both provide analysis of delivery of key milestones set out in the plan at the beginning of the year and the performance of associated KPIs.

The Corporate plan monitoring and reporting reflects on a suite of KPIs, including those that represent the rates at which work is completed efficiently or to the standard expected. This process not only provides assurance about the delivery of our corporate plan but also reporting on business as usual departmental delivery. This is where most of the productivity monitoring will be found.

Delivery against the Corporate Plan is monitored through monthly reporting by Executive Directors to their Cabinet Member and Chief Executive. Formal reports are presented on a quarterly basis to Cabinet with additional analysis via the Performance and Finance Sub-Group of our Overview and Scrutiny Committee

To avoid any additional burden that may impact on our productivity, this mechanism will be used to publicly monitor our productivity as per the requirements set down by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Community. (DLUHC)

Bury
Council