

DLUHC Question	LDC Evidence / Response
<p>1. How you have transformed the way you design and deliver services to make better use of resources.</p> <p>Questions to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How has the organisation changed in recent years to become more productive? You may wish to consider what you have done around staffing, structure, operating models etc: • How do you measure productivity in your organisation? • What changes have you made to improve services, and what effects have those had? • What are your current plans for transformation over the next two years and how will you measure the effects of those changes? • Looking ahead which service has greatest potential for savings if further productivity gains can be found? What do you estimate these savings to be? • What role could capital spending play in transforming existing services or unlocking new opportunities? If you have already used capital spending to boost growth or improve services, we would be interested in learning more: 	<p>Lichfield District Council has taken a ‘disruption’ rather than ‘transformation’ approach to how we better use resources. This is articulated through our ‘Being a Better Council’ programme which Cabinet approved in December 2021.</p> <p>The three-year programme has helped us become the council we need and want to be, a council that is financially sustainable and more responsive to the changing needs and expectations of our residents. Through it we rethought how services are structured and managed, introduced new technologies, improved access to services for our residents and businesses and fundamentally challenged how and what we do. Some highlights include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new, horizontal, Target Operating Model, a break away from the traditional silos seen in local government. We’ve reimaged the leadership layers of the organisation, moving away from old fashioned structures to one that is more enticing to a wider workforce pool. This structure has created a stronger ‘one team’ ethos and culture and delivered approx. £2m of revenue savings. • Established Lichfield West Midlands Traded Service (LWMTS), our wholly owned company as a vehicle through which we can create and operate a level of commerciality for key services. The company is now in its third year of trading and has a budgeted turnover of £5.2m in FY24/25. • Transformed failing services and created a vehicle to generate income to invest back into the district – using our wholly owned company (LWMTS). This included taking back some previously outsourced, poorly performing, services from the private sector. Services now provided by the LATCo include – a Planning Consultancy (inc. major developments), Communications, Disabled Facilities Grants (allocating our full grant in-year for the first time, £500k more than the previous provider), Property, Leisure Centres (12% revenue growth, 17% membership growth in year 1), a Bio-Diversity Brokerage and Human Resources. • Developed a long term and shared strategy for our district. Lichfield District 2050 sets out an ambitious future while recognising the challenges we face (climate change etc).

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What preventative approaches you have undertaken and can the value of these be quantified? • Are there wider locally-led reforms that could help deliver high quality public services and improve the sustainability and resilience of your authority? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changed from an inwardly focused council that rarely engaged, to engaging with over 15,000 residents on a range of topics, including our ambitious Lichfield District 2050 Strategy, our budget, design codes and leisure through our Together We focus. • Radically changed our approach to performance management, introducing the private sector practice of Objectives & Key Results (OKRs) and moving away from traditional annual appraisal. All staff are now reviewed six-monthly and annually and rated and moderated by leadership team annually. • Invested heavily in Belonging and Wellbeing for staff – creating an ongoing dialogue about belonging, one team strength and culture. This includes offering enhanced staff benefits (bonus and private healthcare). • Introduced effective use of data and benchmarking. We are the only district council in the country with a Social Progress Index (approx. 50 indicators of wellbeing at a ward level). Our local Integrated Care Board is now willing to share anonymised health data at a ward level so we can start to develop more preventative responses using our social prescribing models and more precise responses to issues in the district. • Started to place make following 20 years of struggling to do so, through key regeneration projects. Using our available capital and without the need to externally borrow, we have entered a commercial joint venture to bring forward a city centre cinema and food & beverage ‘quarter’ using a disused Debenhams building – investing approx. £10m. The site will generate around £600k rent a year (although the MTFS is currently not dependent on its receipt), when fully launched. This is also the catalyst to our finally regenerating the 7-acre site the council has accumulated over a number of years. Our regeneration plans are now well developed, and we are marketing the first zones for development. • Grown the confidence to withdraw a draft local plan built around a spatial strategy no one (Cllrs and residents) liked – We are a growth positive council but determined that growth will not be at the expense of the quality of life and heritage of our current key settlements. We are seeking to develop a new settlement in our district and bring it forward with an infrastructure first approach through a new local plan. • Invested in the health and wellbeing of residents. Currently building a new modular design leisure centre, opening a disused railway line as a greenway for residents and introducing new sports (padel tennis, wall climbing, and a competitive obstacle course) – all aimed at encouraging more people to be more active, more often. • Developed a 25-year capital plan to help futureproof capital investment need and resourcing. • Reimagined our District Council House creating a fully refurbished, dedicated ‘business hub’ providing much needed office space for more than 20 local businesses. The rental income generated now fully offsets the running costs of District Council House, allowing us to invest the money we have saved into priorities that matter the most to our residents. • Over the next two years, we will continue to rethink the roles and job descriptions we still use. There is an opportunity to merge roles, create new ones and continue to attract across a wider available workforce.
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<p data-bbox="107 244 701 379">2. How you plan to take advantage of technology and make better use of data to improve decision making, service design and use of resources?</p> <p data-bbox="107 427 376 451">Questions to consider</p> <ul data-bbox="107 464 712 855" style="list-style-type: none"> • What are your existing plans to improve the quality of the data you collect; how do you use it and how do you make it available to residents? • Are there particular barrier from legacy systems? • How often do you share data with other organisations, and do you find this useful? • Are there opportunities to use new technology to improve workflows and systems, such as predictive analytics and AI? 	<p data-bbox="745 244 2098 308">Lichfield District Council is an early adopter, tech friendly organisation and we have invested in new technologies as part of our Being A Better Council programme. Highlights here include:</p> <ul data-bbox="745 355 2098 1121" style="list-style-type: none"> • Robotics and digital automation, including investment in two robots that now manage parts of the planning and benefits processes for us. We now have a programme of processes for automation and a skilled team to focus on them. • Currently investigating the use of GenAI in planning and customer services processes. • Rolled-out a ‘single online form’ for residents to report, apply or book for any district council service, creating a better resident experience, easier access to our services, and reducing back-office processing. • Launched ‘live chat’ in customer services to increase speed of response and align with customer expectations, and working to launch WhatsApp. • Introduced effective use of data and benchmarking. We are the only district council in the country with a Social Progress Index (approx. 50 indicators of wellbeing at a ward level). Our local Integrated Care Board is now willing to share anonymised health data at a ward level so we can start to develop more preventative responses using our social prescribing models and more precise responses to issues in the district. • Created and invested in a ‘digital’ team, creating new roles such as business analysts and including apprentices. • Launched new ways to pay including online direct debits for garden waste and leisure memberships. • As part of the action plan approved as part of the procurement strategy, we have enhanced the procurement team with the appointment of a new social value co-ordinator. • Commenced transitioning our key IT / digital infrastructure to the cloud, to help up manage increasing financial and cyber risks. • Begun a conversation with multiple organisations about the power and adaptability of AI and how it might assist with the provision of our services.

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<p>3. Your plans to reduce wasteful spend within your organisation and systems.</p> <p>I know we will share the aim to reduce waste wherever we can and, while you have all made huge strides in recent years, no organisation is ever 100% efficient. You should set out your plans to reduce wasteful of 'gold-plated' spend.</p> <p>Questions to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you approach identifying and reducing waste in the organisation? How do you monitor progress? • Where have you followed invest to save and what was the result? • How much time and money do you spend on staff EDI training (internal and external), networks, and other programmes? How many EDI Champions do you have as an organisation? How do you log and report the time and money spent on EDI related activity? How do you assess the effectiveness of that training? • What percentage of total staff budget is spent on a) agency and b) consultants? How do you assess value for money on agency & consultancy spend and what are your plans to reduce use / costs? How many of these consultants or agency staff have been in place for over a year? • What governance structures do you use to ensure accountability of spend? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We introduced a new Target Operating Model in October 2022, alongside a clear ambition to use technology to underpin the bold move away from traditional structures and silos you see in local government. This new approach to how we are structured, supported by significant time invested in developing a more healthy and confident culture for the organisation, has helped us focus more on processes that add value to our residents and less on those that do not. • The council is now 'slim'. Cllrs rightly worry about capacity. What enables us to continue to challenge our services to provide the best they can for residents is our culture. We have a commercial mindset, where every week is a tough, exhausting week, but it is well rewarded and appreciated. We think this is very different from the majority of our sector. • We add to cultural improvements by introducing new tech and new skills. We've invested in robots, a focussed digital team, successive cohorts of apprentices and a series of new roles such as talent lead, business analyst etc. • EDI is writ through our belonging and wellbeing strategy. It is a key priority in our strategic communications with staff, with regular training and information sessions on EDI. We encourage the establishment of Staff Network Groups and celebration events. • On governance structures, we utilise a Cabinet structure with a single Overview and Scrutiny Committee and an Audit Committee both chaired by a member of the principal opposition party. We are currently seeking to recruit two independent members to the Audit Committee to ensure we have sufficient oversight over risk, governance, financial management and increasingly commercial approaches. • We have developed our wholly owned LATCO to be capable of supporting the transformation of services and providing a vehicle to generate income to invest back into the district. The company, having been dormant for a number of years initially, has begun trading in 2022/23 generating a turnover of approx. £500k, increased in 2023/24 to approx. £4m and in 2024/25 to around £5.2m. • We are ambitious for our place and, in the absence of being able to attract LUF in particular, we have invested our own reserves and created partnerships (LLPs) with private sector partners to bring a city centre gateway project to life after 20 years of the site lying dormant. A Limited Liability Partnership with Evolve Estates has been created to deliver the cinema development, which will be the catalyst for city centre regeneration in Lichfield. • We are now seeking to trade services with other local authorities through our wholly owned LATCO – including talent acquisition, capital projects, leisure, and our planning consultancy. • We continue to rely on and invest in shared services for services such as payroll, internal audit, joint waste, health and safety and building control.

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do you share office functions with other councils and if so, how useful do you find this?• If you share external training costs with neighbouring councils, how do you factor our duplications of service between your council and your upper-tier council (if you have one)?• If you have one, what is your assessment and experience of working with an elected mayor, combined authority, or devolution deal?• What proportion of your paybill is spend on trade union facility time?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We are part of the Leaders' Board structure in Staffordshire which in turn is engaged with government over a devolution deal for our county. Our emphasis, in our interactions over devolution are on add value to our residents over simply the devolution of money to the county.• We have a positive working relationship locally with the trade unions. We are open and transparent about the need and shape of change, and this openness is welcomes. This means that limited time is required to facilitate the relationship.
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<p data-bbox="107 178 680 242">4. The barriers preventing progress that the government can help to reduce or remove.</p> <p data-bbox="107 284 721 459">These will be barriers preventing you from going as far or as fast as you would like to. I would like your plans to set those out, so that we can understand how government, or the market, can help you overcome these barriers to go even further.</p> <p data-bbox="107 501 385 529">Questions to consider:</p> <ul data-bbox="107 539 721 888" style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the barriers preventing you from improving productivity further within your organisation? • What are the barriers preventing you from improving services further? • Are these barriers consistent across multiple services? • What would you need to remove those barriers? What do you need from government, the market or elsewhere? 	<ul data-bbox="752 178 2085 753" style="list-style-type: none"> • The lack of multi-year funding settlement is a real barrier to long term planning. The decision to invest in services including those of a preventative nature, where returns can be over the medium to longer term, is challenging without funding certainty. The level of uncertainty also means that the level of reserves set aside to manage risks is at a higher level than they would necessarily be with greater certainty. Therefore, there is less funding available to invest in place shaping activity and invest to save type projects. • The amount of bid-based funding streams often focussed on a very narrow service area also mean that capacity is required to complete funding bids. In Lichfield District’s case this is coupled with a much lower probability of success due to the metrics used to assess investment need. In the event you are successful, the monitoring processes are also very onerous. • Place shaping is more challenging where different organisations are responsible for different placed based assets, funding streams and benefits from the investment. Different priorities and levels of ambition across the tiers can make place shaping more difficult. Lichfield District Council has approved the investment of an additional £20m in place shaping our district in the last year. District Councils are best placed to know their communities and we are delivering. We can and should take on more powers to deliver true localism. • The local audit environment that provides assurance to stakeholders is solely based on a market led approach. Therefore, if firms do not bid or do not perform there are limited alternative options available.