

Appendix: Performance Plan Actions

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Action 1

Deliver £500,000 efficiencies in the waste and recycling service through a combination of savings and increased income within 2 years.

We will:

- undertake a service review of the operational waste service to identify efficiencies and new business opportunities
- streamline processes to make them more efficient
- identify opportunities for improving service delivery to customers and business opportunities to generate income
- introduce new/improved chargeable services to generate additional income.

Responsible officers:

- Jeff Membery
- Bode Esan
- Phil Bird

- Cat Quay

Date:

June 2026

Progress:

Service review started and highest potential opportunities identified.

Action 2

Introduce AI assisted telephone enquiry service so that customers can call the Council with enquiries 24 hours a day and enabling the delivery of savings in the medium term.

We will:

- procure a tried and tested AI solution that has been proven to drive efficiencies at other Councils
- modify the solution so that it meets the needs of our residents and businesses
- deploy this customised solution by the end of March 2025.

Responsible officers:

- Jeff Membery
- Phil Bird
- Sonia Constant

Date:

March 2025

Progress:

3 Potential solutions identified and are under evaluation.

Action 3

Further strengthen the self-serve options available to customers and introduce a Business Portal so that local businesses can have the same level of access to services as our residents.

We will:

- streamline processes, making them more efficient, and automate data input from customers via self-service forms to provide better quality information
- provide businesses with a secure portal to access real-time information from back-office systems and automated self-service forms, accessible 24/7
- ensure that both citizen and business portal platforms are standardised, dynamic and answering questions that customers are asking.

Responsible officers:

- Jeff Membery
- Phil Bird
- Sonia Constant

Date:

October 2025

Progress:

Initial work undertaken to identify portal requirements. Project Initiation Document produced, and resources allocated.

Action 4

Planning.

We will:

- expand the roll out of the ISO9001 Quality Management Framework to encompass the shared planning service Built and Natural Environment and Planning Policy teams

- Responsible officer: Charlene Harper
 - Date: September 2024
- complete and implement the work being done with the “Digital Catapults” programme on automation in the plan making and development management process.
 - Responsible officer: Terry DeSouza
 - Date: March 2025
- implement the Planning Accelerator Programme in partnership with DLUCH to speed up decision making on strategic planning applications.
 - Responsible officer: Heather Jones
 - Date: March 2025
- implement the recommendations of the Planning Committee review to increase efficiency, effectiveness and participation in the decision-making process.
 - Responsible officer: Rebecca Smith
 - Date: September 2024

Action 5

The Revenues and Benefits service will implement the findings of the service reviews, streamline processes and deliver savings.

We will:

- deliver £500,000 savings within Revenues and Benefits by streamlining the ways of working and move towards more interaction with Customers using on-line methods of communication
- move toward more flexible working in Revenues and Benefits and introduce more generic roles where a Benefits officer can also deal with Council Tax queries and vice versa.

Responsible officer:

Dawn Graham

Date:

September 2024

Progress:

2 stage service review undertaken and restructure bedding down. Training programme being undertaken to assist the move to generic working.

Action 6

Improve processes in the Housing Service to save money and improve customer service.

We will:

- streamline the process of reletting Council homes, further improving efficiency
 - Responsible officer: Zoe Cox
 - Date: December 2024
 - Progress: Data Analysis complete, looking at process improvement

- continue to look for innovative options to avoid the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for people facing homelessness, for example by leasing more properties to use as HMOs, and increasing the number of 1 bed properties leased from the Councils Housing Company
 - Responsible officers: Heather Wood and Susan Carter
 - Date: April 2025
 - Progress: Use of external funding to provide grant to ESH to purchase 1 bed properties.

- introducing mobile technology to housing staff, starting with the repairs team.
 - Responsible officer: Eddie Spicer
 - Date: January 2025
 - Progress: Testing started

Action 7

Further strengthen the analysis of customer satisfaction data using this to inform further improvements in customer experience.

We will:

- develop and produce a quarterly data pack for all managers summarising that quarter's customer feedback data
- provide data on customer satisfaction with new self-serve processes to transformation board which includes two cabinet members
- review and improve the structure of our feedback survey so that it provides customers with more opportunity to tailor their feedback on the areas that are most important to them.

Responsible officer:

Kevin Ledger

Date:

June 2025

Progress:

Work already started on the quarterly data pack.

DLUC Questions:

Question: How much time and money do you spend on staff EDI training? How many EDI champions do you have? How do you log and report on money spent on EDI activity? How do you assess the effectiveness of that training?

Response:

- EDI is an important aspect of how the Council thinks and operates. However, instead of spending money on specific training and/or staff, the Council's approach is to incorporate EDI into everything we do as a natural part of the way that we work.

- We do have staff EDI champions who voluntarily take on this role as well as their normal job and meet regularly to advise the Council on how we can further strengthen diversity and inclusion.
- Some money is occasionally spent on specific events such as Black History Month, the total spend on all specific equalities events is less than £4,500 per year.

Question: What percentage of your paybill is spent on trade union facility time?

What percentage of the staff budget are spent on agency staff and consultants? How many of these staff have been in place for over a year? How do you assess value for money of these staff? What are your plans to reduce spend in this area.

Response:

- Less than 0.01% of the wage bill is spent on Union Facility time.
- 9.8% of staff budgets are spent on agency and 5.3% on consultancy.
- Where the need for temporary support is expected to last more than 3 to 6 months, the Council will look to employ staff on a fixed term contract rather than employ agency staff. However there are a small number of agency staff that have been at the Council for more than a year where a need has lasted longer than initially expected - Homes for Ukraine being a good example of this.
 - **Action:** All agency staff employed by the Council are reviewed every 2 months to decide if a change to a Fixed Term Contract would be more appropriate.
- Agency staff are only employed where either -
 - It would not be appropriate to recruit permanently as the task they need to undertake is short term. (Homes for Ukraine being an example)
 - A "one off" task needs to be undertaken which requires specialist skills not already available in-house.
 - There is a delay in recruiting into a business-critical role which therefore needs short term cover.
- The Council has been trialing a 4-day working week. This has improved retention and recruitment which has reduced agency spend on those staff covering vacancies. The reduction in agency spend due to this is around

£483,000 a year. (The benefit of this saving is shared with Cambridge City Council for those posts that relate to the shared planning service).

- **Action:** Over the last couple of years, the planning service has moved from employing over 30 agency staff to employing only 6.

Question: What do you need from Government, the Market or elsewhere?

Response:

- It would help if Government could provide more clarity around what investment opportunities the Council could pursue that would satisfy the PWLB borrowing rules that do not allow authorities to borrow for yield. Whilst prescriptive rules are not helpful, having little clarity is not helpful either.
- Stability and a clear commitment and programme timeline on continuing planning reform – particularly on the delivery of regulations to progress new Local Plans.
- A return to multi-year funding settlements.