

# Productivity Plan



# Purpose

The Local Government Finance Settlement 2024/25 introduced a requirement for all councils to produce a Productivity Plan that is endorsed by Members. This document summarises activities that the Council has already undertaken and includes an overview of work in progress and planned throughout 2024/25.

## About Gedling

Gedling is a district council to the North-East of Nottingham, with a population of 117,700, across 51,551 households, representing just over 14% of the total Nottinghamshire county population. Gedling is statistically typical in many ways with population, health and socio-economic indicators that align broadly with national averages. These averages however mask some stubborn pockets of deprivation and significant socio-economic and health disparities between different areas of the borough, with life expectancy 8.6 years lower for men and 6.7 years lower for women in the most deprived areas of Gedling than in the least deprived areas. Like many parts of the UK, Gedling has a growing, ageing population.

The Net council budget for 2024/25 is £14,937,900. Gedling has had the seventh largest reduction in Core Spending Power when comparing 2024/25 to 2015/16 out of 349 Authorities in England. Despite these challenges, Gedling is ambitious and wherever possible our teams have sought to maximise income and we have worked in partnership to deliver positive outcomes for local people, aligned to our vision of 'Serving people, improving lives'. The Council plays a lead role in the local Integrated Care System to support improved health and wellbeing outcomes through social prescribing to individuals most in need. Operational re-design work has seen income, attendances, memberships and swim school participation for children and young people at our leisure centres well exceed pre-Covid levels.

The development of the AMP building in Arnold, improvements to the natural environment and the achievement of Green Flag status for five parks are some of the visible symbols of the Council's positive impact on the place, along with the completion of 689 new homes in 2022/23, including 93 affordable homes, which is the fastest rate of housing completions since the late 1970s.

But we are not complacent. To be sustainable we know we need to continue to strive for even more efficient, responsive and reliable services, making better use of emerging technology while listening carefully to local needs. To ensure continued forward focus on what matters most to local people, the Council has recently re-structured its senior management team and is developing a whole council transformation approach to accelerate the achievement of outcomes set out in the Gedling Plan, both to improve customer satisfaction and, critically, to ensure high productivity and necessary savings.



# Key challenges

- Lack of government funding certainty beyond single year settlement.
- Requirement to bid to multiple pots and commensurate overhead.
- Significant impact on overall spending power due to financial settlement reduction.
- Rising demand, demographic changes and cost of living within communities, with people needing more support.
- Rising costs including inflation, fuel and utility costs, staff costs.
- Recruitment, retention and workforce development risks.
- Availability of affordable housing and resulting presentation of Homelessness, alongside the challenge of the asylum dispersal model.
- Limited availability of employment land.
- Multiple wider policy changes in tandem (change on change).



# Our approach

Long before it was a requirement to produce a Productivity Plan, Gedling has punched above its weight in delivering improvements to services that seek to ensure value for local residents and businesses.

Since 2014/15 the Council has approved budget reductions totalling £7.5m, while seeking to minimise the impact on front-line services, ensuring a sustainable Medium Term Financial Plan. To ensure prudence, a set of core principles sit at the heart of budget planning, embedding accountability, ensuring alignment to strategic priorities, and seeking to maximise value. Achievements to date include achieving 'more for less' by delivering services differently, sharing services with other councils and office accommodation with other public services, managing demand and reducing avoidable contact, improving value through procurement, tighter contract management and seeking to maximise income.

The progress of the annual efficiency programmes has been positive, with productivity improvements able to be evidenced and budget reductions achieved broadly in line with the profiled targets. The tighter financial environment due to increased costs, inflationary and demand pressures, and future funding uncertainty, means we have even more to do. From 2024/25, additional productivity gains and savings are needed, with cashable efficiencies of £3,558,900 required by 2028/29.

The Council has been active in developing plans to deliver the necessary changes and in its recent Budget to Council, proposals of £833,700 were agreed with £406,200 planned and due for delivery in 2024/25. A further £500,000 has been identified for delivery through process automation, systems integration, demand reduction and channel shift supported by our Digital, Data and Technology and Workforce Development Strategies. Plans for the remaining £2,225,200 of required savings are in development and each will be underpinned by a robust business case to enable clear line of sight of costs, expected benefits and risks to enable effective prioritisation.





# Measuring our impact

We understand the criticality of an effective control framework to the achievement of our target outcomes and for each area of improvement we seek to establish a baseline, a target and an accountable owner, tracking both activity and outcomes achieved. Our Constitution and Financial Regulations set out parameters for decision making and we report periodically to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committee in relation to budget.

Aligned to the budget, we use performance management software to measure outcomes against The Gedling Plan. These are reviewed by Gedling's Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and reported to members on a periodic basis with appropriate scrutiny, and if necessary, remediation, to bring the targets back on track. Annually, a report is published to Cabinet to ensure that Members have full visibility of the annual outturn in relation to key performance indicators and progress against projects and planned actions.

Projects are monitored using a standard project and programme management methodology, with each Project having an appointed senior Sponsor (Accountable Owner) and Delivery Lead (Responsible Owner). Status updates are facilitated via Project Boards / Steering Groups, with updates visible across the portfolio to enable escalation should it be needed.



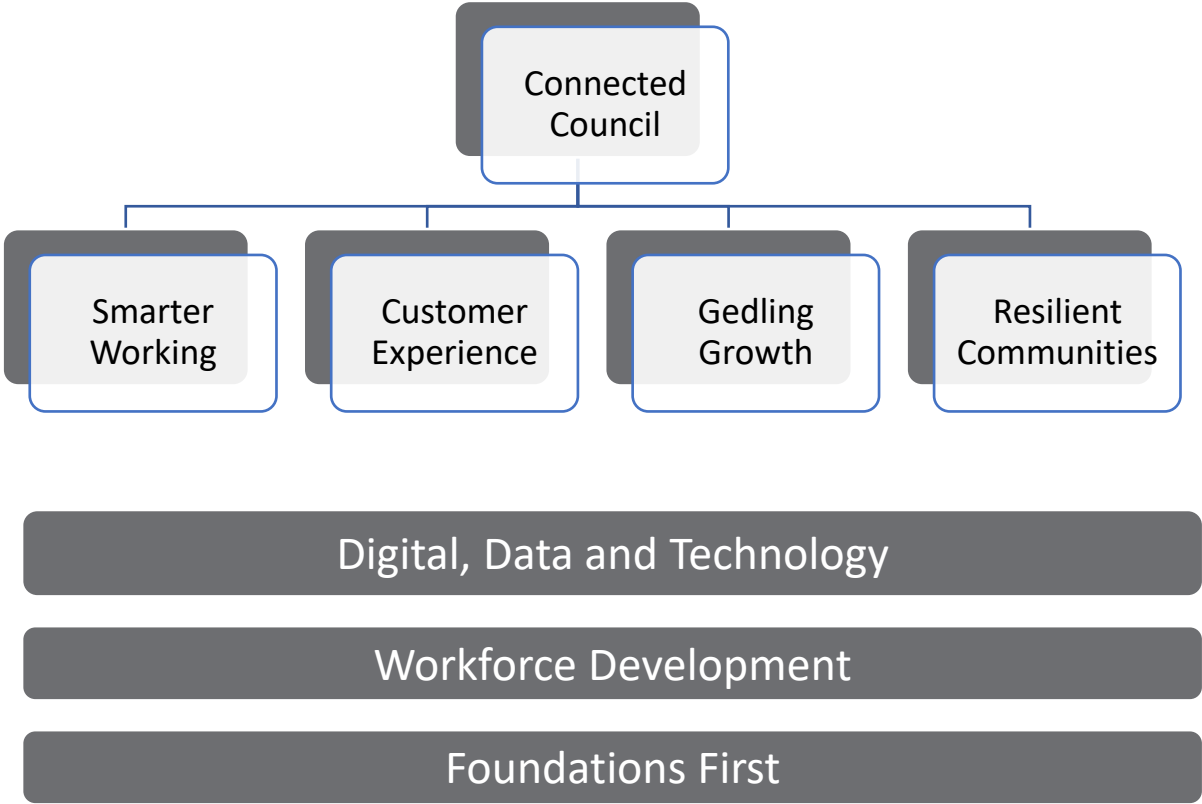
# Our Plan

As we accelerate our ambitions in 2024/25, supported by changes to our Senior Management Structure, we recognise the criticality of establishing strong, joined-up foundations for the broader and deeper changes that are now planned.

The cross-cutting nature of the changes we are making, and the pace with which they will be delivered, requires engagement across the whole Council and we recognise that change will only be effective if it is supported by a cohesive narrative and an effective delivery and control framework that builds on our successes so far and seeks to provide us with the necessary focus, clarity of vision, prioritisation and oversight, required for success.

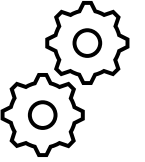
To this end, the ambitions of The Gedling Plan (covering Economy, Community, Place and The Council) are underpinned by a portfolio of change that groups planned projects into thematic delivery programmes, enabling us to monitor dependencies and to prioritise and sequence delivery focused on ‘what matters most’ to make best use of our overall resources.

The diagram to the right indicates the planning that is underway to categorise activities into themes and to ensure each delivery theme is supported by appropriate data insights, makes best use of technology and is enabled by workforce development to ensure we develop new skills within our teams to support new ways of working.



The following pages highlight elements from our Corporate Plan and thematic delivery programmes that will enable the delivery of increased productivity and efficiency.

# Our plan: Connected Council



The Council recognises that it can only maximise its impact if it works horizontally across service area boundaries, and in partnership across the place. While we already take a 'One Council' approach to delivery, we know there is more to do to embed systems thinking in the delivery of our services and to use resident feedback to shape improvements. Our existing strong partnerships are further supported by the recent East Midlands Devolution Deal, providing an additional opportunity for councils across the area to work together on joint bids, commissioned services and wider collaboration opportunities.

Productivity gain	Baseline	Our target	Planned activity
By 2025/26, we will move away from individual Service Plans for our services, in favour of an outcome-based framework that supports the ambitions of the Gedling Plan, joins interdependent activity together for maximum impact and embeds strategic accountability across our refreshed management team. This will increase collaboration, simplify planning and associated overheads and ensure focus on what matters to our residents most.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Currently our service plans are refreshed annually and aligned to each service area with a golden thread to our Gedling Plan. Financial planning and service planning are managed separately.</li></ul>	To deliver an integrated, outcome-based framework that better supports the next step in our ambitious plans for transformation, moving away from individual service area planning to integrated plans that maximise efficiency in delivery and align finance and service planning in tandem.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Appointment to new management structure (underway).</li><li>Refinement and alignment of existing delivery portfolio (underway).</li><li>Service plans for 2024/25 to be aligned to programmatic delivery areas in support of the Gedling Plan.</li><li>Planning for 2025/26 to be aligned on an outcome basis (no individual service area plans from 2025/26 onwards).</li></ul>
We will explore opportunities for sharing and collaboration to maximise our impact, efficiency and effectiveness with other East Midlands authorities, building on the existing partnerships in place through the new East Midlands Combined County Authority (EMCCA).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>A shared procurement service with North East Derbyshire District Council; provision of payroll services for Rushcliffe Borough Council and legal services to other councils.</li><li>We lead on community development and integrated neighbourhood working programmes for the South Nottinghamshire Place Based Partnership and have established a Gedling Social Mobility Commission to improve the life chances and opportunities for young people.</li></ul>	<p>To continue to maximise value by seeking opportunities for greater sharing of services where it is economically viable and strategically aligned to do so.</p> <p>In 2024/25 we are exploring a shared service opportunity for building control with a neighbouring local authority.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Build on the initial exploration activity underway around potential for shared services and contracts to achieve economies of scale where appropriate.</li><li>Improving health outcomes of residents through the South Nottinghamshire Place Based Partnership's Integrated Neighbourhood Working programme using the Building Blocks of Health model.</li><li>Gedling Social Mobility Commission to develop a case for investing in improved life chances for children and young people in the borough.</li></ul>
We will work with our residents and our communities to support them to access our services locally and in ways that suit them, using resident and business feedback to continually improve and iterate our service offer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>We capture and use customer feedback to improve services, regularly reviewing demand, insight and complaints data to enable improvements.</li></ul>	To systematically embed customer centric ways of working, to enable deeper insights that enable root causes of demand to be addressed, and take up of digital channels to be optimised, creating capacity for people who can't engage digitally.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Review of Customer KPIs in 2024/25 aligned to the Customer Experience programme.</li><li>Improved customer insight through Customer Relationship Management (CRM).</li><li>Creation of a Digital Inclusion Partnership framework and Network locally by 2025/26.</li><li>Digitally upskilling residents and staff.</li></ul>

# Our plan: Smarter Working

## Corporate plan target: Innovation and Improvement

We strive to make improvements by doing things differently and collaboratively, to improve services.

**Timescale:** May 2024 – March 2027



Productivity gain	Baseline	Our target	Planned activity
Optimisation of finance service delivery, including introduction of new Cloud finance system and increased self-service for budget managers.	Agresso (Unit4) finance solution in place with on-premise installation. No self-service in place for budget managers.	Implementation of Cloud finance solution (April 2025), roll out of self-service for budget managers by Sept 2025. Frees support for transformation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Procurement, installation, configuration, training and roll out of new Cloud system, and associated process changes.</li> <li>Optimisation of solution, including self-service, automation.</li> <li>Consideration of rationalisation of related ICT components.</li> </ul>
Optimisation of HR services, including a review of the service, re-focusing resources to support transformation and enable workforce development for new ways of working.	A small HR team is in place, with some resilience to support change, however with greater focus on transformation there is a need for greater capacity in Organisational Development..	Re-position resources to support transformation activity, creating capacity by systemising elements of current HR delivery, introducing additional capacity through funded programmes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Workforce Strategy (approved).</li> <li>Review of HR team, aligning capacity alongside programmatic capacity to support transformation.</li> <li>Systemisation of HR processes.</li> </ul>
Fees, charges and commercialisation review.	Gedling collects income from fees and charges totalling more than £8.68m per annum.	To further increase revenue from fees and charges by £332k over 3 years (£133k 2024/25, £121k 2025/26, £78k 2026/27).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fees and Charges policy and action plan implemented by end of 2024/25 to achieve additional income targets.</li> <li>Movement to payment in advance for all services.</li> </ul>
Leisure and wellbeing service transformation to increase physical and social activity levels amongst residents, reduce the carbon footprint of leisure assets and significantly increase leisure centre income to reduce the subsidy burden on the Medium Term Financial Plan.	Strategic Outcomes Planning Model Vision & Outcomes and Playing Pitch & Outdoor Sport Strategy adopted (2023). Leisure Centre Attendances 2023/24: 1,153,000 (target 1,060,000) Leisure Centre Memberships 2023/24: 4,389 (target 4,125) Swim School Memberships 2023/24: 4,070 (target 3,800)	Leisure Centre Attendances 2024/25: 1,165,000 Leisure Centre Memberships 2024/25: 4,500 Leisure Centre Swim School Memberships 2024/25: 4,200	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strategic Outcomes Planning Model and Indoor Built Facility Strategy delivery.</li> <li>Feasibility planning for new Leisure and Community Wellbeing Hubs in the Borough.</li> <li>Continue plans to increase attendance and membership.</li> <li>Strategic investment in outdoor sports facilities using UK Shared Prosperity Fund, Football Foundation and Lawn Tennis Association (LTA).</li> </ul>
Optimising income collection.	NNDR collection rate 2023/24 97.9% Council Tax Collection rate: 97.8%	NNDR collection rate 2024/25: 98.9%. Council tax 2024/25: 98.5%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Further automation of collection activity aligned to transformation programme.</li> </ul>
Minimise waste – optimisation of waste service delivery, including route optimisation, end to end process efficiency and reduction in agency cost.	End to end processes not systemised. No route optimisation in place. Agency spend in 2023/24 well above budget level.	End to end service delivery systemised, 'right first time' metrics tracked. Routes optimised for productivity. Reduction in agency spend.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Waste Modernisation project linked to Customer Experience and Smarter Working Programmes.</li> <li>Business case for route optimisation and data driven operating model design right sizing.</li> </ul>
Drive greater efficiency through procurement and contracts and make better use of technology.	Commissioned service from North East Derbyshire District Council.	To maximise the efficiency of our procurement and contract activity. To move towards a single digitally enabled contracts register/contract management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Service review to align with new regulations, exploration of wider economies of scale through sharing.</li> </ul>



# Our plan: Customer Experience

## Corporate plan target: Customer Engagement

Our Customer Experience will be ‘the best possible and our facilities and services will be accessible to all. **Budgetary saving:** £500,000 phased from 25/26 **Timescale:** May 2024 – April 2027

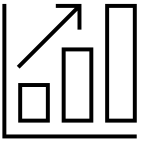


Productivity gain	Baseline	Our target	Planned activity
Reduction in administrative effort within end-to-end customer facing processes through process re-design, system integration and workflow automation.	Initial data indicates that there is manual processing within end-to-end process and opportunities to better systemise ways of working. Baseline data is being collected as part of service Discovery.	Targets for each service are being set on an evidenced basis following Discovery.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cabinet approval of Workforce Strategy and Digital, Data and Technology Strategy, with associated budget (complete).</li><li>• Customer Strategy and Target Operating Model defined to enable more contact to be addressed at the first point of contact. In 2024/25.</li><li>• Development of a single Customer Experience programme including:</li><li>• Strategic Discovery and outline business case (identification of high-level cost and benefit) by August 2024.</li><li>• Specification and selection of new CRM and CMS solutions by October 2024.</li><li>• Consideration of call routing and limited Interactive Voice Response technology to enable skills-based routing and make better use of data.</li><li>• Mobilisation of Customer Programme Team.</li><li>• Base solution build.</li><li>• Phased CRM implementation with joint end to end Service review for every customer facing service.</li><li>• Waste system implementation and integration with the CRM.</li><li>• Training for Waste and Customer Service teams.</li><li>• Introduction of e-billing for customers who are able to interact online.</li><li>• Improve customer experience at leisure centres through ongoing development of the leisure management system.</li></ul>
Reduction in avoidable contact within customer services and complaints across services through end-to-end visibility and progress tracking, customer self-service and right first time delivery.	<p>Avoidable contact is not currently tracked, although anecdotal evidence suggests that more than 30% of all contact within customer services is avoidable. Work is underway to understand the baseline position.</p> <p>The Council received 407 complaints in 2023/24, of which 58% related to waste services. Data indicates a large proportion of these complaints would be avoidable with greater systemisation and customer communication.</p>	<p>To reduce avoidable contact on a phased basis aligned to the delivery of new service processes as a result of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and Content Management System (CMS) changes, a new Waste System and associated staff re-skilling.</p> <p>Once the new systems are in place, we would expect to see a minimum 20% reduction in complaints about waste services.</p>	
Reduction in printing and postage as a result of improved use of targeted online communication and online billing.	<p>E-billing introduced with commensurate reduction in print and postage costs.</p> <p>Council tax and business rate print and postage costs currently c. £107,000 pa.</p>	To reduce printing and postage costs by at least another 20% by 2026/27.	
Adaptation of customer service operating model to become multi- channel (including automated web chat), introducing tiering to enable workforce progression and reduce hand offs and aligning supply of staffing to customer demand.	Limited systemised forecasting of demand. High observed volume of avoidable contact (primarily chase ups). Channel metrics managed separately. Limited granularity to performance metrics.	Productivity metrics to be introduced including forecast /demand comparisons.	

# Our plan: Gedling Growth

Corporate plan target: Economy and Place

Timescale: 2024 - 2027



Productivity gain	Baseline	Our target	Planned activity
Enable economic growth.	Economic Growth Framework 2022 – 2027 in place. Work underway jointly on potential funding bids into EMCCA. Master planning work underway on vision for Arnold Town Centre. Long Term Plan for Towns Programme Carlton - £20m budget awarded and Board appointed. We have collected £7.5m in strategic CIL and spent £5.9m on strategic projects, including Gedling Access Road and Gedling Country Park. Currently £1,649,444 Strategic CIL is available. Green Flag awards for 5 parks across the borough.	Enable holistic economic growth in the borough through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infrastructure investment.</li> <li>• Investment in town centres and smaller local centres.</li> <li>• Development and improved connectivity to green spaces.</li> <li>• Support for SMEs.</li> <li>• Investment in capacity building.</li> </ul>	Commission footfall assessment in town centres. Ambition Arnold consultation - long term vision. AMP Enterprise Centre first floor. Hill Crest Business Park extension. Carlton Town (LTPFT) and UKSPF Programme. Investment in smaller local centres and rurality. Support for SME and Micro businesses. Maintain sustainable employment corridor around Colwick.
Enablement of strategic growth.	Development plans / policies in place to support growth including 2014 Aligned Core Strategy, Part 1 Local Plan adopted by GBC, Broxtowe BC and Nottingham City Council. 2018 Local planning Document Part 2 Local Plan for Gedling, 2015 Gedling Community Infrastructure Levy, S106 agreements secured for affordable housing, open spaces, education, health and highways to mitigate impacts of housing growth. The Five Year Land Supply Assessment 2023 defined a housing need of 463 homes per year. 111 affordable homes were delivered in 2023/24.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of Killisick site.</li> <li>• Working with development partners through our established Developers Forum.</li> <li>• Attracting research and development/ innovation; looking to the future with a local skills strategy.</li> </ul>	Review Local Plans and CIL. Development of a Greater Nottingham Strategic Plan (GNSP). A replacement Part 2 Local Plan for Gedling following the adoption of the GNSP. A review of the CIL expenditure priorities (Infrastructure List) in 2024/25. Expansion of temporary accommodation to mitigate homelessness costs. Development of Burton Road and Station Road sites for provision of social housing Development of Skills Strategy.
Leveraging external funding.	£150k leveraged from One Public Estate towards Ambition Arnold on top of £200k Council investment. Small scale grants secured e.g. play area funding from FCC Communities Foundation, Lawn Tennis Association grant funding for tennis courts, Football Foundation funding, Cyber funding from government. Collaboration with health and wellbeing and community partners to bring in external funding and resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To have a clear funding strategy and approach to securing and prioritising funding opportunities.</li> <li>• To maximise opportunities for external funding in support of our priorities.</li> <li>• Maximise use of Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund.</li> </ul>	Review funding strategy for growth, aligned to the Economic Growth Plan. Identify funding sources aligned to Council's vision. Identify capital funding through business case development and housing developer contributions. Deliver external funding programmes with the Integrated Care System, Public Health, Football Foundation and Lawn Tennis Association.
Making the most of council assets.	Corporate Landlord function established. Land disposal at Killisick in progress, enabling capital receipt to fund investment in community facilities, enabling economic development and wellbeing. Civic centre shared use with other public services.	Comprehensive review of assets. Further shared asset use with partners. Leveraging of assets, maximise impact.	Property Asset Management Plan / Strategy. Energy efficiency improvements to enable cost reduction. Consideration of community asset transfer where appropriate and sustainable to do so.



# Our plan: Resilient Communities



Productivity gain	Baseline	Our target	Planned activity
Better health and wellbeing of residents through increased opportunities to participate in leisure and culture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaboration with health and wellbeing and community partners to bring in external funding.</li> <li>• Percentage of adults who were inactive 2022: 16.4%</li> <li>• Social Value of Swimming in Gedling: £4,558,902 (Swim England, 2023).</li> <li>• Bonington Theatre Attendances 2023/24: 47,456.</li> </ul>	<p>A reduction in the levels of adults who are inactive (Active Lives Survey). Increase the social value of leisure centre activity. Bonington Theatre Attendances 2024/25: 48,000.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater integration with health and wellbeing partners to enable patient access to community and leisure centre social and physical activity.</li> <li>• Business case for a new theatre and cultural hub for Arnold.</li> </ul>
<p>Strengthening communities – capacity building in the local area, supporting improved productivity across the place.</p> <p>A strong, resilient and sustainable voluntary and community sector.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No CVS organisation based in Gedling.</li> <li>• Gedling Community Hubs and Partners Network.</li> <li>• Integrated Care System and Public Health funded community development programme for South Notts established by the Council.</li> <li>• Awarded £2.86m in UKSPF Grant Funding (Dec 2021) to enhance facilities, increase opportunities and services to the public, to support high street activities and community events in the borough's town and local centres.</li> <li>• Creation of £50k pa 'Strength In Community' Grant Fund.</li> </ul>	<p>Use the SIC Grant Fund to enable community sector partners to enhance internal capacity and broaden their offer to encompass events delivery, employability, life skills, household financial resilience, health and wellbeing services and bespoke solutions to specific communities and vulnerable residents. Periodic monitoring returns detail outcomes and outputs that align with targets set in the Gedling UKSPF delivery plan.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing review of outputs and outcomes.</li> <li>• Community support offer to build on work undertaken to date.</li> <li>• Using the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to design and implement a new virtual voluntary and community sector infrastructure model that includes digital platform development to enable self-service support for the local sector</li> </ul>
Growth of services for and in communities, extending the reach of existing health and wellbeing services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gedling Health &amp; Wellbeing Co-production Partnership.</li> <li>• Collaboration through the South Nottinghamshire Place Based Partnership.</li> <li>• Asset mapping across communities and signposting through the Gedling Guide.</li> <li>• Carlton Community Connector Role.</li> <li>• NHS England and Improvement Target Prevention Programme on the Killisick estate.</li> </ul>	Reduction in health inequalities across the Borough.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Further development and implementation of Integrated Neighbourhood Working across the Borough adopting the Building Blocks of Health model.</li> </ul>
To increase the sustainability of community events.	The Council has a small annual events budget that is used to fund small scale community events designed to support community cohesion.	To increase partnership working and explore external funding opportunities that enable events to become self-sustaining over time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exploration of funding options.</li> </ul>
Reduce the cost of homelessness provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of B&amp;B accommodation.</li> <li>• Agreement of £2m fund over 2 years to acquire stock to reduce total costs of provision.</li> </ul>	Acquisition of temporary accommodation on a phased basis to meet increasing demand in the most cost-effective manner.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phased use of agreed funding to enable support and value for money in homelessness provision.</li> </ul>
To reduce the economic costs of anti-social behaviour on all agencies.	Use of CIL funding to improve infrastructure to prevent ASB (e.g. lighting in parks).	Working more closely with police, including co-location. Continue to strengthen partnerships to reduce Violence Against Women and Girls.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued investment using CIL.</li> <li>• Maximisation of co-location to further enable partnership working.</li> </ul>

# How can the government help?

**Strategic:** Across the sector, demographic changes, alongside insufficient housing supply and the pressures our residents face because of increased costs and reduced public service support all contribute to additional demand pressures outside of our direct control. The fallout from County Council functions such as Adults and Children's Services is also felt at a district level, with rising, and more complex demand presenting at our front door. Across the country, local authorities of all types are facing unsustainable pressures, exacerbated further by inflation, and need to make difficult choices with limited resources, including balancing investment in preventative and enabling services while dealing with a tsunami of increasing service demand. While devolution is a positive step for the East Midlands, enabling decisions to be made closer to local people, at a national level the need for public sector reform has never been greater. An emphasis on true partnership and subsidiarity at a place level, supported by fairer local funding, interventions that support increased affordable housing supply, and creating the conditions for service integration, would all make a significant difference.

**Financial:** Gedling supports calls for longer term funding for the sector. With only a one-year settlement in place, councils lack the financial security required to plan strategically and to determine the affordability of capital investments in the long term. We know that short term decision making may not necessarily reflect best use of resources and the challenge of funding is exacerbated by the short-term nature of grants, including the Shared Prosperity Fund which is starting to have a real impact locally, but ends 31 March 2025, and there is no certainty over the provision of New Homes Bonus. While the continuation of flexibilities that enable capital receipts to be used to fund transformation is welcome, multi-year settlements and longer-term financial planning nationally would enable Gedling to be bolder, more ambitious and accelerate its plans from a sound financial footing. Removing referendum limits on Council Tax and greater freedom and flexibilities with regards to raising income would also make a significant difference. In addition, funding is not always available to match national priorities. Achieving carbon reduction requires local action, but does not attract additional funding, or where it does, high levels of match funding are not always affordable. Legislation changes, such as Simpler Recycling, while welcome strategically, do not attract full cost recovery, and with the national minimum living wage and resource shortages in specialist areas such as planning impacting pay inflation, councils face multiple pressures.

Finally, fairer funding is needed that aligns income to local need and addresses the current inequality inherent within funding allocations that has led to Gedling being one of the worst impacted councils in relation to overall spending power in recent years. Super-scaling investment across regions using pension funds and a modern government-backed PFI schemes through appropriate investment partners could also better support sustainable local area growth.

**Administrative:** The current approach where councils bid to multiple funding streams nationally for grants is not only piecemeal, but inherently inefficient, leading to a high administrative overhead that can often not be met within existing resources and requires reliance on consultants, at a cost, and with no guarantee of success. Government could help councils to reduce consultancy spend by reducing the administrative overhead of maintaining multiple different funding streams, enabling greater value.

**Data and digital:** The lack of a single data standard for local government means that systems are hard to integrate, data is harder to share, costs are prohibitive and public service providers are less efficient as a result. While individual government departments have each made some progress on standards, a national focus on a consistent data standard for core data entities, and of open standards sector wide could make a significant difference to the costs of delivering ICT enabled change. Additionally, councils face challenges in migration to Cloud solutions as on-premise solutions are tangible assets, often with one off costs that can be capitalised, whereas modern Cloud solutions are revenue funded, placing greater pressure, as councils modernise, on increasingly stretched revenue budgets once they have gone live.



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