

LUTON
2040



Corporate Peer Challenge

Luton Council Progress Review

January 2025

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WELCOME BACK!

We're delighted to welcome the peer team back to Luton.

We benefitted so much from your time here in March, and are excited to show the progress we've made since you were last here. The conversations during that week, and the recommendations you left us with held a really helpful mirror up to our system-focused work, and over the past 9 months, these have shaped and informed our approach. We've made excellent progress towards all 10 recommendations, and know that this is going to have a tangible impact on the lives of our residents as we continue to build on the recommendations and hone our town-wide delivery towards Luton 2040.

The eradication of poverty in the town remains our core mission – a mission we know is having an impact. We are delighted that this year numbers of people living in destitution in our town has dropped from 12.1% to 9.9% of households in Luton, a positive change in circumstances for almost 5,000 of our residents and a continued downward trend since the pandemic.

We know that this still means a significant number of people are living in destitution in our town, which is why our vision, perhaps more ambitious than any other in the country, remains strong. Your support and the work we have put in over the past months, means we are we're now able to talk with clarity about what this vision will mean in the shorter and longer term – no one in our town living in destitution, and ensuring that for those that slip into poverty, our community-centred approach to creating a safety net provides timely routes out of poverty.

Despite Vauxhall's announcement that they will exit from the town - devastating to those employed there and with the potential to set back to our economic growth we are determined to bounce back. The progress we have made since the review in developing our economic growth strategy means we have the resilience we need to keep moving forward. Our recent job and business creation has been exceptional – the number 1 place in the country for job growth between 2010 and 2022 and last year we were second best in the country for business creation. Thousands of new jobs are being created through schemes coming forward. We have seen consistent rises in the average wages across Luton. We have exciting developments in our town centre to look forward to. The numbers of young people in Luton not in education, employment or training, or permanently excluded, are both lower than the national average, and education outcomes for those from disadvantaged backgrounds are better in Luton than both national averages and statistical neighbours.

Our journey to net zero is ahead of the country as a whole and litter reported in the Keep Britain tidy survey has halved since 2021. Our new Head of Economic Growth and Strategic Regeneration has built momentum towards the transformation of the town centre and our Economic Growth strategy, with a mission-focused approach to build a productive, inclusive and resilient economy. And on top of all this, we know it is our biggest strength that drives us forward - our community. The commitment to Luton and resilience of our diverse population enables us to repeatedly punch above our weight and confound expectations.

As we welcome you back to Luton, we can't wait to share how your recommendations are already having an impact on our work and journey towards 2040.

We are able to share the roadmap for our journey to 2040, and how we're going to measure and track our progress towards our wildly ambitious goal. This, for the first time, allows us to vividly paint the picture of our vision for Luton in 2040 – the shape of poverty, our economy, our health, our children, our net zero ambitions and our strong, fair community. Further resource for that team has taken time, but it is now secured, and while we need to build further momentum for our



system-wide places, the new framework created by the roadmap, and our new governance structure, will create clarity of our ask – we expect to see further progress in this area.

Our finance review has taken time to get up to speed, but now has a level of traction and momentum that will sustain it going forwards. The key levers in our Transformation Programme have moved in-house, setting a firm foundation to the process that we are confident will lead to necessary savings. Our executive team and structure has been strengthened, and we have maintained our Charter Plus accreditation.

Housing remains a keystone issue, but we are pleased with the progress we have made in implementing the recommendations, seeing a change of leadership in the area, and a reallocation of both members and officer resources. We believe these changes will be turned into delivery in the coming months and years, with 300 fewer people in temporary accommodation than they were at this point last year.

It has been a hugely busy year in the town: for the second consecutive May weekend, Luton became the centre of the world. Following 2023's Wembley heroics, this year, the eyes of the UK focused on Stockwood Park as Coldplay rounded off a 'Big' weekend that will live long in the memory. It was the highlight of another unforgettable year in Luton, moving us closer on our ambitious 2040 journey.

As we hope you will see as you read through this report, over the last ten months we have made significant progress towards the recommendations peers set us when they visited in March. We are proud of what our teams have delivered and the progress we have made together. Alongside this, we wish to acknowledge that the issues we are trying to change, such as housing and town centre safety, are large and complex and as such our RAG ratings reflect our work towards the recommendations, rather than delivery towards these complex issues. Therefore, although we have delivered towards these recommendations, there is still much work to do before we see the change in these areas we are looking for.



HIGHLIGHTS SINCE MARCH



Luton has the highest net new job creation in British cities and large towns 2010-2022, even ahead of London



Work has begun to restore Wardown Park Lake



Smoking prevalence reduced by 7% to 14.1% between 2023 and 2024



Luton has the second highest business start-up rate in the country



Establishment of full, improved set of council KPIs, and system-wide outcomes, targets and measures for Luton 2040.



5000 fewer people living in destitution since 2023



Hosted BBC's biggest ever One Big Weekend – including Coldplay's very own song dedicated to Luton.



Early indication of positive shift in resident survey (data still being cleansed and analysed – further details available closer to visit)



Funding secured for trailblazing 'Stable Homes built on Love' pathfinder programme in children's services



Launch of The Luton Programme, bringing £1 million in to Luton's creative sector, enabling the delivery of creative work that will improve the economic and social development of our town.



University of Bedfordshire ranked 1st in the University Green League



THEMES

This report outlines the progress and the next steps we are going to take, set out in the following four themes that were identified as part of the review.

1.

2040

2.

Member
Development

3.

Finance and
Transformation

4.

Place



PROGRESS SUMMARY

As we hope you will see as you read through this report, over the last ten months we have made significant progress towards the recommendations peers set us. We are proud of what our teams have delivered and the progress we have made together. Alongside this, we wish to acknowledge that the issues we are trying to change, such as housing and town centre safety, are large and complex and as such our RAG ratings reflect our work towards the recommendations, rather than the changes made to these complex issues. Therefore, although we have delivered these recommendations, there is still much work to do before we see the change in these areas we are looking for.

Theme	Recommendations	Key Actions	RAG
2040	To establish a comprehensive data driven roadmap and delivery plan under the five pillars of Luton 2040. To be underpinned an outcomes framework that charts progress over 1, 3 and 5 years.	Roadmap: Creation of 40 outcomes and measures for 2040, with milestones and targets Reset of 2040 governance structure Implementation of council-wide strategic framework	Green
	To ensure that all system partners deliver on their high-level commitments that greater structure is provided from the council to partners that translate their pledges into demonstrable actions over the next 1, 3 and 5 years.	2040 roadmap creates new framework for pledges Work with partners underway to refresh pledges within framework with demonstrable actions 'Missions' for 2040 identified and launched early 2025	Orange
Member Development	Reset of the Executive decision-making function – to include regular informal meetings of the Executive informed by a forward plan and regular meetings between CLT and Executive, to facilitate a more coordinated response to strategic challenges.	Refresh of the composition of the Executive Mentors identified for new Portfolio Holders Realignment of the Executive Portfolios to recognise the findings of the CPC Quarterly Exec/CLT away days to review progress against our strategic challenges.	Green
	To enhance the current member development programme so the Executive team can effectively fulfil their responsibilities and lead on culture change.	Exec Team Building Day planned Wigan visit looking at organisational culture undertaken on 16.07.24. Follow up sessions with Leader and Finance portfolio also completed. LGA Charter Plus accreditation for Member Development retained (June 2024) Organisational change exercise being completed (In Q4 24/25) to move Business and Member Support team into Democratic & Electoral Services	Green

Theme	Recommendations	Key Actions	
Finance and Transformation	To develop a culture that enables corporate ownership of financial management – to include investing to achieve an effective business partnering model to improve financial management and the sharing of responsibility across the council.	CIPFA is currently undertaking a comprehensive independent external review of financial management.	
	To rapidly increase the capacity to deliver the transformation and deficit recovery programmes, to help assure financial sustainability over the medium term.	<p>The current portfolio is expected to deliver over £5m in budget savings over the coming year. Work is continuing to drive the savings programme towards the £13m target</p> <p>New Head of Transformation appointed</p> <p>The Council's corporate programme management office established</p> <p>Council has migrated from using Human Engine resources in the PMO to Luton staff</p> <p>Additional Luton employed roles have also been created to lead on each of the priority programmes</p> <p>A new PMO framework has been developed and is in place.</p>	
	To prioritise strategic activity in order to address capacity issues across the council. Continue to progress the implementation of the people strategy at pace, with incisive focus on this, as well as capability, culture and EDI.	<p>The People strategy board has established five workstreams with representation from across the Council to lead on the key themes for the coming year. The themes are: Recruitment and retention, Development, Employee experience, Wellbeing, EDI.</p> <p>Over 339 learning activities took place and 84% of our workforce participated in at least one learning event last year. A flexible Bank Holiday pilot scheme was launched. New recruitment function created with centralised compliance team checks.</p> <p>Visited Wigan to learn from their Wigan experience approach to embedding values and behaviours and established annual programme of wellbeing learning and support events</p>	

Theme	Recommendations	Key Actions	
Place	<p>The development of a corporately led new and ambitious strategic approach to the delivery of affordable housing. This should be underpinned by a robust delivery plan, utilising innovative solutions, within a year. This must become a corporate and partnership priority, informed by best practice</p>	<p>Amended Executive Portfolios to bring all housing delivery into a single portfolio</p> <p>Staffing restructure bringing all housing delivery staff into a single directorate team (Property and Housing Delivery).</p> <p>Member/officer board established to focus on housing delivery.</p> <p>Identified parcels of “grey belt” land to review options for additional delivery in Luton.</p> <p>Mobilised the allocated budget of £10.5m and secured additional budget provision of £20m for acquisition of additional TA</p>	
	<p>To prepare the ground for the successful execution of the town centre master plan, refocus the multi-agency town centre operational task force to actively address and alleviate the overt challenges evident in the town centre.</p>	<p>Appointed a new Head of Economic Growth and Strategic Regeneration, with a specific focus on leading the town centre delivery plan</p> <p>Work begun on Town Centre Delivery Plan - a roadmap for the town centre’s development,</p> <p>Completion of our new public realm design guide</p> <p>Formation of a dedicated Town Centre Taskforce, formed to address immediate issues in the town centre, uniting several previously disparate groups.</p> <p>Dedicated town centre project officer has been appointed to project manage and coordinate all workstreams</p>	
	<p>As part of the emergent work to develop an economic development strategy, the council should use research, analysis and engagement (at a local, regional and sub-regional level) to establish a clear understanding of economic growth opportunities for the borough’s diverse population. To then secure alignment with employment pathways.</p>	<p>Terms of Reference for the new Economic Growth Strategy agreed</p> <p>WSP have led an extensive stakeholder plan and developed an evidence base which profiles Luton’s sectors and demography with three emerging missions</p> <p>Through the South Midlands authorities, a regional economy strategy is also being produced. This work will support our future work on a devolution deal for the area.</p>	

1. 2040

RECOMMENDATION: To establish a comprehensive data driven roadmap and delivery plan under the five pillars of Luton 2040. To be underpinned an outcomes framework that charts progress over 1, 3 and 5 years.



WORK TOWARDS RECOMMENDATION

Since March's Corporate Peer Challenge, we have made tremendous progress in building on our strategic framework, using it as the basis for our road map. To achieve this we needed to set clear outcomes in line with our five priorities, outline measures that will take a temperature check on how well we are delivering towards those outcomes and set targets and milestones for each of the measures, mapping our journey from 2024 to 2040. We identified 40 outcomes, trying to balance the complexity and wide reach of the 2040 vision, alongside the need for a simple approach that makes it easy for people to understand and contribute. To further streamline this work, we have identified six headline measures and outcomes which act as a summary. The 40 measures and outcomes are outlined below. A full list of target's and milestones can be found in Appendix A alongside an overview of how our measures, strategic framework and governance align.







Child Friendly Measures and Outcomes



Net Zero Measures and Outcomes



Milestones have been set to align with election years, ensuring we can be more responsive to rhythms of policy change. This aligns with our newly created Planning and Reporting Cycle, which ensures regular refreshing of the council's key vision, plans and strategies, alongside regular quarterly and annual reporting.

Crucial to this piece of work was not only to identify measures and targets, but to do this in partnership with our many delivery partners, ensuring that the road map is reflective of shared ambitions and plans from across the whole system. To achieve this, we have taken time to meet with partners and reset our governance structure for Luton 2040, enabling partnership groups to take responsibility for the oversight of changing the dial on one or more of the measures.



The Luton 2040 Partnership is a new group we have established and is key to holding the structure together by providing system wide leadership across our five priorities and taking ownership for our headline measure – the number of people living in poverty in the town. The first meeting of the Partnership will take place in March 2025, pulling together 'anchor' partners who can have the biggest influence in driving change across the whole of Luton and beyond. These include the Chief Executive of London Luton Airport Operations, Luton Council of Mosques and Luton and Dunstable Hospital.

The next step we need to take is to support each partnership group to identify the delivery plans that will move the dial on each of the measures. Our five strategies, as outlined in our strategic framework, are key documents in enabling us to identify this delivery and are being reviewed with this in mind.

Once delivery is clearly identified, each partnership group will be responsible for regularly reviewing progress, identifying areas for development and instigating change. This will be supported through the installation of an online reporting system, making it easy for groups to see and share progress. An overview of how our measures, strategic framework and governance aligns can be found in appendix B.

Finally, to ensure everyone across Luton can engage, a simplified version of the road map will be developed that can be used widely across the system to communicate how Luton will look different in 2040 because of our collective efforts today.

FUTURE WORK

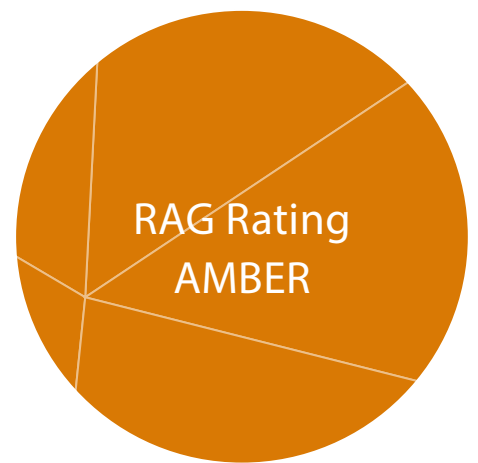
The measures and outcomes were signed off by Exec on 2nd December, and form the basis of the 2025 Progress Report, which outlines our journey to, and progress towards 2040, including the outcomes, milestones and targets. This will be published at our conference in February 2025.

We have also agreed plans and identified further funding to develop the work of the Luton 2040 team, setting up a strategic hub that will bring further alignment across all council policy creation and strategic planning, supporting partnership development across the system and refocusing the business intelligence team to ensure better synergy with corporate priorities.

As a result of the work, we expect to see greater aligned prioritisation across the council and the system, which we are already seeing through the alignment of our key strategies, such as the Child Friendly Town Strategy.



RECOMMENDATION: To ensure that all system partners deliver on their high-level commitments that greater structure is provided from the council to partners that translate their pledges into demonstrable actions over the next 1, 3 and 5 years.



WORK TOWARDS RECOMMENDATION

The Luton 2040 Road Map provides a framework from which to monitor progress, make informed decisions about delivery, and provides the structure required to deliver on the further recommendation from peers as above.

Since peers visited in March, we set out to work with pledge holders to identify demonstrable actions for the coming years. We soon learnt that we needed the Road Map in place to provide the framework to enable people to know how to do this. Despite this, we have made some good progress in this area, updating five of our existing partnership pledges and gaining seven more in our new target and delivery focused format, increasing our total number of pledge partners to 37.

These include pledges from the ICB, Active Luton and Barnfield College, and outline what the organisation is going to deliver in the next three to five years to change the dial on 2040 measures. For example, Active Luton have pledged to contribute towards the 2040 outcome for 'the town centre to meet the needs of residents and attract visitors' by making improvements to the Town Centre Library. They have also said they will contribute towards the 2040 outcome for 'all children and young people up to the age of 25 to be in education, employment or training' by developing a pilot programme for SEND young people (post-16) as part of a five-day educational provision over the next year. The ICB have said that they will contribute towards the 2040 outcome for 'residents and children to be listened to and influence town decisions' by embedding a 'What Matters to you' page into patient records, enabling patients to document how they would like to be treated when it comes to their care. They have also said they will contribute to the 2040 outcome for 'residents to be able to access medical appointments when they need them' by working with practices to support consistent delivery of same day primary care over the next 12 months.

Further work to update pledges continues with a workshop planned with Luton and Dunstable NHS trust to explore their commitment to Luton 2040 in January 2025.

We are in the process of developing an online system that allows partners and the council to track and monitor delivery in real time. This will enable us to be much more dynamic as a system, helping us feed progress more responsively into our partnership discussion and decision making.



To further help this, we have recently summarised the Road Map into six key missions that we will deliver on as a system over the next three years that will make a key contribution to our 40 outcomes. These missions, which are aligned with each of our five priorities and strategic plans will help pledge partners to clearly identify what they can deliver that will make a difference. Missions will be launched at the Luton 2040 conference in February and will be used as the basis for updating pledges in the future. These missions are:



Better Off Luton

Better Off Luton's central mission is to ensure everyone in Luton gets the help they need to maximise their income. Through two primary workstreams, Better Off Luton will drive local action to reclaim unclaimed benefits and build financial literacy in the community.



Generosity

This mission, to make Luton the most generous town in the UK builds upon our strength and demonstrate the amazing selfless streak that makes our town unique. We know that generosity goes beyond money, and into time and volunteering. This mission values each aspect of that, and encourages everyone in Luton to play their part in our journey to 2040.



Keeping the Luton Pound In Luton

One of the most impactful things we can do for the Luton economy is committing to spend locally whenever we can – keeping the Luton pound in Luton.



Reducing Smoking

Smoking rates in Luton contribute significantly to preventable illnesses, affecting overall population wellbeing and placing a strain on healthcare services. By reducing smoking, Luton can promote better health outcomes, lower healthcare costs, and increase life expectancy.



Trusted Adults

2024's Growing up in Luton survey reported that 10% of year 10 students feel they have 'no trusted adults' to turn to. This trusted adult can be found in various settings, from home, schools and community groups, to extended family or places of worship and is independently chosen by the young person to trust.



Green Corridors

This mission aims to rewild corridors stretching 86km along the River Lea and main transport routes through Luton, by planting trees, bushes, native flowers and long grass.

FUTURE WORK

To lead the way, the council has updated all our performance measures ensuring alignment to Luton 2040. These will be used to update our Corporate Plan, which will act as the council's pledge – outlining how we will contribute to 2040 and lead the system to do the same.

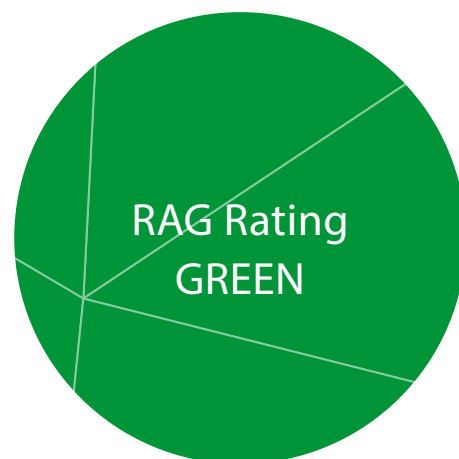
The development of the Luton 2040 team, also enables us to recruit a Luton 2040 Partnership Officer who will be responsible for mapping, developing and supporting others to build further pledge relationships supporting partners to monitor progress and delivery. The aim is that this new role will develop 50 more pledge partners over the next three years. To support this, we are also looking at implementing a Customer Relationship Management system, enabling us to better track our partnership, identify points of contact and ultimately make our work more efficient and effective.

Our 2040 conference this year, Change Today, focuses on how our partners can contribute today to the long-term changes we want to see with the aim of promoting more tangible delivery in the shorter term.

In future years, our aim is that our anchors will have a 2040 lead within their organisations, forming part of a cross organisational team that together supports the growth of Luton 2040 delivery across the town.

2. MEMBER DEVELOPMENT

RECOMMENDATION: Reset of the Executive decision-making function – to include regular informal meetings of the Executive informed by a forward plan and regular meetings between CLT and Executive, to facilitate a more coordinated response to strategic challenges.



RECOMMENDATION: To enhance the current member development programme so the Executive team can effectively fulfil their responsibilities and lead on culture change.



OVERVIEW

Positive progress has been made towards these recommendations. This has seen the council make a number of changes to the decision-making function and supporting the Executive. Notably, the Council recruited two new members to the Executive within the children's and adult social care portfolios, with both provided external mentors and access to relevant training to support them in their new roles. The council has also carried out an exercise to realign the executive portfolios, with a particular focus on the CPC findings and recommendations,

for example, more clearly defining the areas of housing strategy and build, with a separate portfolio taking responsibility for housing operations (see housing recommendation for further details).

The move from bi-annual to quarterly joint Exec/ CLT away day meetings has enabled a greater level of collaboration between the officer and political leadership teams around the strategic issues affecting the council as noted by the CPC. This change has been particularly beneficial with regards to the budget position, transformation programme and town centre, whereby the new approach has enabled the joint team to undertake deeper dives into the issues and find jointly owned solutions. This approach has also been reinforced by the additional planning time the Executive team takes following formal Executive meetings, which has enabled the Executive team to review forward plan and talk through future agendas, plus spend regular time discussing the budget position.

In terms of Executive team fulfilling their responsibilities and leading on culture change, while the planned team building day for Exec will now take place in January, some Exec members were involved in an organisational culture day and follow up visits held with Wigan Council to learn from the positive work happening there. Additionally, the Executive team are taking joint ownership of reports at Labour Policy Group; this is viewed as a positive cultural step, where reports at Policy Group are now co-owned and presented by the Portfolio Holder and lead Officer.

Since March, the council has also retained its LGA Charter Plus accreditation for member development, which noted the strong political leadership commitment to member development and the clear evidence of how the programme was supporting members to fulfil their community leadership roles, in terms of the positive contributions regarding serving the council, partnership working, supporting local residents and delivering our 2040 vision. After successfully gaining LGA Charter Plus accreditation 3 years ago for our collaborative approach to councilor learning and development, we were assessed again in June 2024. This involved evidence gathering presented in a portfolio against set criteria, interviews with members of a joint Officer-Cllr steering group, the leader and party leaders, the Chief Executive and partner representatives from Active Luton, University of Beds and Mary Seacole Housing Association– resulting in the assessment panel awarding us Charter Plus for a further 3 years.

The LGA Member Development Charter and Charter Plus was established to support the continuing professional development for councillors by being a contract between the council and its councillors that commits to invest in councillors' growth and development.

Our achievement demonstrates the commitment, work and effective collaboration between officers and councillors to promote, provide and continually improve learning and development opportunities for all councillors to ensure they are equipped to perform their critical roles as elected members and community leaders.

The Member Development Steering Group is focusing on delivering the new action plan and notably a refreshed programme of training to commence in April 2025, including a specific focus on the Executive and their training needs.



WORK TOWARDS RECOMMENDATIONS

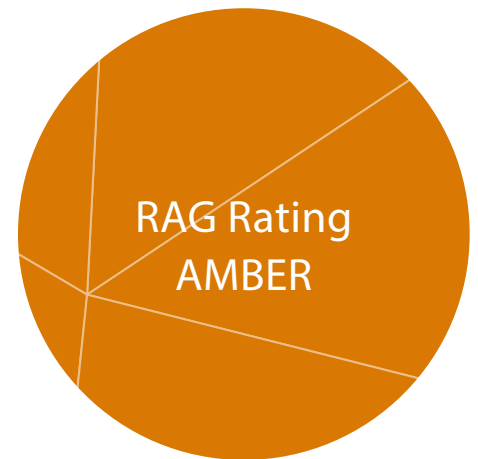


FUTURE WORK



3. FINANCE AND TRANSFORMATION

RECOMMENDATION: To develop a culture that enables corporate ownership of financial management – to include investing to achieve an effective business partnering model to improve financial management and the sharing of responsibility across the council.



WORK TOWARDS RECOMMENDATION

A scope of work has been prepared for a comprehensive independent external review of financial management. CIPFA has been appointed to undertake the review and is currently well advanced in the preliminary stages of document review and interviews with key stakeholders. It is expected that the review report will be available very early in the new year and, therefore, it is likely that the themes identified in the review will be available to the CPC team at their visit. The project sponsor is Robin Porter and the project lead Mark Turner. There is a programme board consisting of Robin Porter, Mark Fowler and Dev Gopal which will report into the Transformation Board. The action owners will be updated accordingly once the project board decides who should take forward the implementation of its recommendations. The review will examine culture and behaviour as well as systems and processes.

The Council's constitution and Financial Regulations make it clear that budget holders are responsible for their budget. The Scheme of Devolved Financial Management is intended to enable the Executive, Chief Officers and their staff to manage budgets with a degree of flexibility within the overall policy framework determined by Full Council and therefore to optimise the use of resources. We currently do not have the right balance of cost centre management oversight and finance team activity with regards to budget management.

We need a more rigorous application of financial regulation to ensure compliance, ownership and accountability. This will require a reestablishment of a collective understanding of the rules of engagement.

There is currently a general lack of understanding of who does what and where decisions sit. This isn't just about "finance training" it's about how we do and want to operate.

We will develop a budget management training and development programme for the different levels of management to raise our overall competence. We will bring in external resource to build and provide the training and development programme. We will implement the CIPFA Financial Management Code.

RECOMMENDATION: To rapidly increase the capacity to deliver the transformation and deficit recovery programmes, to help assure financial sustainability over the medium term.



OVERVIEW

The Council's transformation programme is now in full delivery with a number of key programmes and projects underway to deliver a wide range of financial and non-financial benefits. The current portfolio is expected to deliver over £5m in budget savings over the coming year alongside contributing to the Council's deficit recovery plans where cost pressures are exceeding budget. Work is continuing to drive the savings programme towards the £13m target.

All of the projects have been assessed against the Council's new prioritisation and segmentation matrix to understand risk, impact, governance and resource allocation. Each project has a designated delivery team reporting into the PMO; appropriate and proportionate governance in place and are reviewed monthly at the Transformation Board.



Portfolio

Transformation Programme

Commercial Programme

Contracts and 3rd
Party Spend

3PS – Nursing and
Res Care

3PS – Hospital
Discharge

3PS – Hard FM

3PS – Soft FM

3PS – ATS

3PS – Fleet

3PS – Corporate
Legal Services

3PS – Premises Hire

3PS – Temp Agency
workers

Commercial and
Income Generation

Resident Experience Programme

Resident Experience
TOM

Out of Hours

Neighbourhoods Programme

Neighbourhoods
Working Model

Prevention and Early Intervention Programme

Homelessness and TA

Cost and Demand

Passenger Transport
Unit

Enabling Core Services Programme

Finance Review

Other Projects

Strategic Housing
Development

Procurement Review

Key	 Programme	 Platinum project	 Gold project	 Project not yet segmented
		 Silver project	 Bronze project	 Project being scoped



WORK TOWARDS RECOMMENDATION

A new Head of Transformation has been appointed and started on 2nd December 2024. The Council's corporate programme management office has also been established with a PMO analyst in place since September 2024 and a new Corporate PMO Manager will start in January 2025. This has meant that the Council has migrated from using Human Engine resources in the PMO to Luton staff since November 2024.

Additional Luton-employed roles have also been created to lead on each of the priority programmes through a combination of internal secondments, honorarium and fixed term roles. Resource plans have been agreed for each of the projects and a shared resource planner across Human Engine and the strategic change team ensures effective utilisation of resources. Challenge on new and additional costs is applied to ensure value for money and return on investment.

A new PMO framework has been developed and is in place across transformation projects and programmes with consistent templates and reporting arrangements.

FUTURE WORK

The level of resources, while improving, remains a challenge in some areas, especially with regard to dependencies. This is particularly the case with digital or technology delivery as the Council has recently insourced its IT service (itself a major successful project- which generated towards £1m of savings and increased capacity) and is embedding the new structure. Decisions are being made on resourcing the technology and digital projects that key elements of the savings programme depend upon. The Council is also reviewing its procurement function, processes and thresholds and this is expected to be in place by April 2025.

With the new Head of Transformation and Corporate PMO manager starting, they will begin establishing a community of practice for project and programme delivery alongside working with learning and development on reviewing our training and learning offer to upskill staff across the organisation. The new Head of Transformation will also be reviewing the organisational structure around delivery going forward.

The Transformation programme team is currently working with Adult Social Care to ensure its Deficit Recovery Plan (DRP) is being supported appropriately. All DRPs have been assessed against the prioritisation and segmentation matrix and consideration given to if they should be managed and reported through the PMO. At this stage, the Council has decided to continue to monitor delivery of DRPs through the finance/budget CLT process.

All of the projects are now in delivery and working to deliver the profiled savings and wider benefits. Resource plans are in place and issues and risks are being flagged and addressed at Transformation Board with some reprofiling of activity and reprioritisation of other activities. Recruitment has been successful with some excellent candidates being appointed alongside opportunities for career development for internal staff.

Work is also underway for future phases of transformation to meet the savings targets including achieving greater savings through commissioning and procurement, organisation/workforce structures, enabling/support services reviews, improved automation including AI and RPA and reviewing debt and income collection.



RECOMMENDATION: To prioritise strategic activity in order to address capacity issues across the council. Continue to progress the implementation of the people strategy at pace, with incisive focus on this, as well as capability, culture and EDI.



OVERVIEW

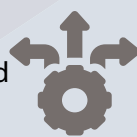
The People strategy board has established five workstreams with representation from across the Council to lead on the key themes for the coming year. Each workstream has then agreed their priorities for the 2024/25 year, which are set out below:

Recruitment and retention



Define and promote Luton's brand and employee value proposition (EVP)
Improve candidate experience including reduced time to hire
Inclusive recruitment practice
Hard to recruit roles solutions/campaigns
Pay scheme review

Development



Review leadership and management development offer
Strengthen onboarding and induction for all
Review career pathways and use of 'recruit for potential'
Identify priority and mandatory skills & knowledge needs and develop a 'permission' culture for learning
Review Council's spend on training and development.

Employee Experience

Flexible & hybrid working review
Flexibility for the frontline
Workplace design
Embedding Luton 2040
IT experience



Wellbeing



Employee Support Programme relaunched
Annual Communications Plan to improve awareness and take-up
Develop people's skills confidence and knowledge to support wellbeing
Leaders' role in supporting wellbeing and resilience
Specific interventions/training/services on key areas of focus, starting with mental health and wellbeing

EDI



Understand barriers to EDI at all stages of employee cycle
Employee voice and engagement (including role of EDI co-ordinators)
Provide an EDI lens to employee related policy reviews
Deep dive into areas of under-representation as identified through data analysis and feedback from staff
Disability focus
Anti-racism charter



The new recruitment team managed 628 job postings from 288 recruitment requests, and 7,988 candidate applications processed between January-June 2024. We're starting to see the benefits through improved recruitment outcomes and a number of previously hard to fill roles being filled.

Our agency spend in 24/25 is forecast to be £3m down on last year with increasing numbers of permanent staff. The percentage of our workforce that is agency/interim is now down to 8.6%. Our turnover remains low at 11% over a rolling 12 month period.

Our equal pay reviews are showing a narrowing of the pay gap across gender and ethnicity. The percentage of all M6 roles and above that are held by Black, Asian or other ethnic groups is also increasing with the latest figures showing 22.6.

WORK TOWARDS RECOMMENDATION

An annual review of the first year of our People Strategy went to the Council's Administration and Regulation Committee in September 2024. The report sets out the scale of progress and action over the last year including:

- Over 339 learning activities took place and 84% of our workforce participated in at least one learning event last year. Average satisfaction scores for activities were 4.3 out of 5
- An insight day gave 7 students with special educational needs and disabilities an introduction to working in local government,
- The Council started to offer T-level placements in HR, economic growth and housing
- 46.8% of our apprentices were global majority (up 4%) and 37.5% were females in STEM roles (up 17.5%)
- A flexible Bank Holiday pilot scheme was launched in April 2024 and trialled with Housing, Civil Enforcement, Street Cleansing and HR services
- New recruitment function created with centralised compliance team checks.
- Started to publish a new quarterly workforce dashboard, showing performance against a set of agreed key indicators
- Reviewed our leadership and management development offer
- Visited Wigan to learn from their Wigan experience approach to embedding values and behaviours
- Commissioned an independent review into our pay structures
- Reporting on the Workforce Race Equality Standard for our social care teams
- Completed self-assessment against the UNISON anti-racism charter that is due to be adopted in March 2025
- Established annual programme of wellbeing learning and support events
- Engagement with front-line teams on workplace environment, flexibility and learning.
- Conducted a staff survey across our workforce with analysis due in December 2024.

FUTURE WORK

Progress against the People Strategy plan and the key priorities identified by the five workstreams is being monitored through the People Strategy Board.

Over the next six months we will have:

- Concluded our review of our Employee Value proposition and agreed new priority messages and brand awareness
- Concluded the review of the Council's pay scheme



- Reviewed our organisational design principles re: spans, layers and decision making accountability
- Adopted the UNISON anti-racism charter
- Relunched our approach to check-ins and appraisals linked to service planning
- Agreed and launched a new leadership and management development programme
- Explored the experiences of our disabled workforce and launched a new workplace adjustment passport scheme
- Improved staff voice opportunities, reviewed role of EDI co-ordinators and launched wellbeing champions
- Reviewed the HR service structure and role within the organisation
- Agreed an action plan in response to the staff survey
- Reviewed some of our major policies including our organisational change procedure
- Reviewed our induction, mandatory and corporate training programmes to ensure Luton 2040 and values embedded
- Publish a disability pay gap report for the first time

IMPACT

The results from our recent staff survey have shown that our work in this area is having a positive impact:

- 65% are happy with workplace culture, up from 58% in 2022
- 25% find their workload 'somewhat' or 'very' unmanageable, down from 42% in 2022
- 74% of staff feel LBC is 'somewhat' or 'very' supportive towards their wellbeing.
- 80% of staff believe the council is performing 'reasonably' or 'very' well in fostering a diverse, inclusive, and equitable organisation.



4. PLACE

RECOMMENDATION: The development of a corporately-led new and ambitious strategic approach to the delivery of affordable housing. This should be underpinned by a robust delivery plan, utilising innovative solutions, within a year. This must become a corporate and partnership priority, informed by best practice.



WORK TOWARDS RECOMMENDATION

Housing pressures and homelessness challenges within Luton remain intense, with demand remaining high. Construction costs remain high with the cost of both construction and borrowing impacting on private and public housing delivery. A new government has set ambitious targets for new housing delivery and affordable housing delivery nationally.

The CPC recommendations have hugely benefitted and shaped our work in the last year and have implemented numerous changes which are putting us on track to improving the housing offer and delivery within the town.

Since the CPC review, we amended Executive Portfolios in May to bring all housing delivery into a single portfolio, creating more capacity for that housing delivery portfolio holder by moving other housing services to another portfolio holder.

We implemented a staffing restructure which concluded in November, bringing all housing delivery staff into a single directorate team (Property and Housing Delivery). This means that property, asset management and development functions across the HRA, General Fund and Foxhall Homes are covered by a single service director.

A member/officer board has been established to focus on housing delivery, supported by a member working group specifically to review partnership options and propose a model and procurement process. We have identified parcels of “grey belt” land to review options for additional delivery in Luton.

We have mobilised the allocated budget of £10.5m and secured additional budget provision of £20m for acquisition of additional temporary accommodation, including hostels. This will be targeted at reducing hotel and nightly paid accommodation to provide improved temporary accommodation options for families and reduce the deficit in this area of spend.

Tenders have completed for new construction contractors to complete the 80 homes on two Foxhall Homes sites which stalled due to previous contractors going into administration, with one new constructor on site, and another due to start in February 2025.

The Stage has planning permission and the FBC achieved full Executive approval in October. Ground works are substantially complete and we are finalising contracts with our main contractor for the main build phase. Main works will only commence once the Building Safety Regulator has issued approvals for the residential development.

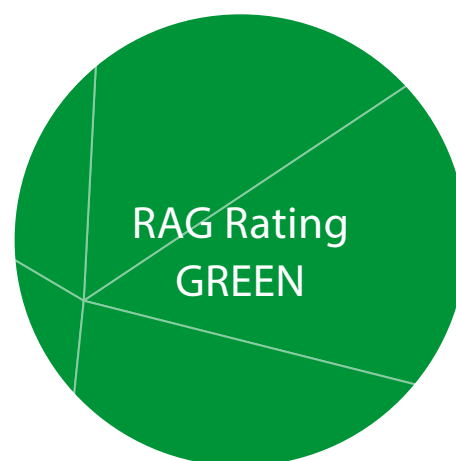
IMPACT

Land opportunities have been followed up to improve our ability to secure land – either for the council or a partnership arrangement. Relationships with local Registered Providers have been strengthened through frank conversations about delivery options. The new portfolio and staffing arrangements have had time to bed in, with a renewed focus on delivery as a result.

FUTURE WORK

We have been exploring a delivery partnership for affordable housing, in order to bring in additional funding, land and expertise to increase the output of affordable homes. This has involved legal advice, soft market testing and establishing a member/officer working group to evaluate options and propose the best solution for Luton. The member group will be meeting weekly with a report back to our Policy Group in January 2025. We continue to learn from good practice in other areas, especially in relation to housing partnership models. We have secured £5m capital funding from our airport dividend for 2025/26 and are looking for land to acquire.

RECOMMENDATION: To prepare the ground for the successful execution of the town centre master plan, refocus the multi-agency town centre operational task force to actively address and alleviate the overt challenges evident in the town centre.



WORK TOWARDS RECOMMENDATION

In late March, we appointed a new Head of Economic Growth and Strategic Regeneration, with a specific focus on leading the town centre delivery plan. The postholder started in July and began detailed work on developing the Town Centre Delivery Plan. This plan, which is a roadmap for the town centre's development, was formally agreed upon in early 2024 with the Town Centre Strategic Board (TCSB) to help directly deliver the Town Centre Masterplan.

THEME 1: Economic diversity and diversity of spaces

Aligns to TCMP priority economic diversity and Inclusive Economy Strategy

THEME 2: Place activation and sense of place

Aligns to Masterplan priority authentic and characterful and IE Strategy, transforming lives through arts culture and heritage

THEME 3: Cleaner, greener more beautiful public realm

Aligns to Masterplan priority greener and healthier, Net Zero roadmap and Population Wellbeing Marmot Town

THEME 4: Safer town centre for all

Aligns to Population Wellbeing Strategy and community safety initiatives

THEME 5: Inclusion and accessibility

Aligns to Masterplan priorities affordable and inviting and sustainable accessible as well as Net Zero, Child Friendly, Disability Friendly Town.

THEME 6: Promotion and inward investment

Aligns to Inclusive Economy Strategy and Step Forward Luton place brand.

Major place activation and public realm works were delivered throughout spring and summer. This included completing our new public realm design guide, a comprehensive document outlining the principles and guidelines for public realm development, with the first three major sites in the town centre currently being developed. Alongside this, a new piece of public art was unveiled, and we hosted several family-friendly events and activities.

In May, Luton hosted Radio 1 Big Weekend. Almost 100,000 festival-goers passed through our town centre. As detailed in an independent report, the festival brought a direct economic impact of almost £7 million to the local economy (outside of the festival itself), with 87% of visitors reporting a positive image of Luton and almost 60% saying they would visit again. Alongside this, Luton was streamed to millions over that weekend and throughout the football season as Luton Town Football Club competed in the Premier League. In partnership with the football club, the Council undertook an independent economic study to understand a) the economic and social impacts of being premier league at the current Kenilworth Road stadium b) the estimated economic and social impacts of the club relocating to Power Court and c) how we ensure across the system that we can maximise the opportunities, looking at sports-led and cultural-led regeneration and how that ties into our wider town-centre vision and delivery of Luton 2040.

September's Town Centre Strategic Board (TCSB), had a focused agenda item on progress against the Corporate Peer Challenge's recommendation. Although some excellent progress had been made (as set out above), we had several immediate knotty issues in the town centre which needed to be addressed through the urgent formation of a dedicated Town Centre Taskforce.

It was important for the TCSB and the Taskforce to be closely linked. The Taskforce, which was formed to address immediate issues in the town centre, plays a crucial role in uniting several previously disparate groups. It ensures that other significant town centre boards and meetings – covering public health, community safety and vulnerable individuals – are represented, thereby fostering a more integrated approach to town centre development.

Membership of the Taskforce was drawn from the TCSB, and it was identified that young people also needed to be represented, given Luton's population and the youth being the future users of the town centre.

The Taskforce has mapped out key projects, initiatives, activities, and key measures. In addition, a dedicated town centre communications plan supports this work. The group meets biweekly, focusing on the highest priority issues in the town centre, and is chaired by the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Inclusive Growth, Cllr James Taylor. The first report of the Taskforce was presented to the Community Safety Partnership at the end of October and is due to be presented to the Town Centre Strategic Board in early January.



Due to the town centre being one of the top priorities for the Council, a dedicated town centre project officer has been appointed to project manage and coordinate all workstreams across the town centre. In early November, Cllr James Taylor presented a motion on the town centre which has received cross-party support. In addition, Cllr Taylor, with support from the Overview Scrutiny Board, has set up a night-time economy task and finish group. This work will directly feed into our new visitor economy plan workstream. The latest figures from our Community Safety Partnership show that anti-social behaviour has continued to follow its overall long-term downwards trend.

The table below provides details of the partners, issues, and successes to date.

Partners	Issues being addressed	Successes
Police, Council (Enforcement, Licensing, Public Health, Comms, Events, Regeneration, Urban Design, Homeless services); Signposts (Homelessness charity); Tokko (Young people focussed charity); Luton BID; Luton Point (previously the Mall); Culture Trust and University of Bedfordshire.	Dealing with prolific offenders; Provision of services for asylum seekers; Ensuring family-friendly events are safe; Licensing off licenses; Aligning public art and public realm works with areas of most need; Addressing the causes of rough sleeping; Encouraging university students to use the town centre and Improving the perception of the town centre by using social media channels such as Instagram and TikTok.	Increased enforcement, including appointment of ASB officer and co-location with police; Strengthened cross-team working in the Council; Integrated public health interventions into operations of town centre; Coordinated Town Centre communications; Implemented prioritisation of issues and opportunities in the Town Centre; Appointed a Town Centre Officer to support the Taskforce and wider Delivery Plan; Public Realm and place activation work underway and Establishment of a night-time economy Task and Finish Group.

FUTURE WORK

Alongside the Taskforce's continued work, we will start to formally populate the Town Centre Delivery document, with a clear implementation plan against the six themes, with a medium to longer-term approach to our town centre. To ensure maximum stakeholder buy-in and engagement, we are planning to host workshops in January to map out short, medium and long-term plans across different areas of the town centre, looking at it as being in four parts (as per the masterplan) with the connections between the parts being key to establish so that all areas benefit from regeneration.

Some feasibility work has begun to support the town centre delivery plan, and catalyst sites are being identified. One of those (The Stage) is close to beginning construction, with the Power Court planning application going to the Development Control committee in December. This will also kickstart the next phase of work around maximising the opportunities from sports and cultural-led regeneration.

A full review of the governance of the town centre groups is taking place alongside the Taskforce and Town Centre Strategic Board and will be clearly mapped out and agreed upon as part of the Town Centre Delivery document.

An early draft of a Town Centre Delivery Plan will be consulted on in Q1 2025, with the final Town Centre Delivery document and implementation plan signed off in Q2 2025.

RECOMMENDATION: As part of the emergent work to develop an economic development strategy, the council should use research, analysis and engagement (at a local, regional and sub-regional level) to establish a clear understanding of economic growth opportunities for the borough's diverse population. To then secure alignment with employment pathways.



WORK TOWARDS RECOMMENDATION

Terms of Reference for the new Economic Growth Strategy were agreed with the town-wide Inclusive Economy Board back in May. Following this, the procurement of specialist support to develop the Economic Growth Strategy was progressed. WSP were the successful company and have led an extensive stakeholder plan and developed an evidence base which profiles Luton's sectors and demography. The evidence base provides a cornerstone and a fine grain review identifying the economic challenges and opportunities in Luton that led to the identification of the key missions and actions in the strategy.

At the core of the strategy is the opportunity for Luton to grow, with an Airport Economic Zone creating momentum for Luton's aviation industry as well as Luton's core and emerging sectors, as new trade routes are established via the DCO and as Green Horizons Park comes on stream once investment has been secured. The strategy aims for growth to have a genuine, inclusive, and prosperous impact on Luton and its people.

Our vision for Luton 2040 is not just about growth, but about inclusive growth. We are dedicated to eradicating poverty and ensuring that everyone in our community benefits from our economic strategy.

Work is underway to draft the strategy, including a vision, missions and interventions. An extensive round of consultation and engagement will follow this. The emerging missions are: Productive (potential growth sectors and also how we help businesses become more productive), Inclusive (access to employment and also linking up anchors and supply chain) and Resilient (improving the town centre and putting the foundations in place for regeneration and renewal, so that Luton talent stays in Luton).

Sectors are cross-cutting, meaning that where we see growth or the opportunity for businesses to do things more productively, this feeds through into the need to develop skills and ensure that we have the right space, infrastructure and place.

The table below summarises the emerging Missions and Strategic Priorities:



Mission	Strategic Priority
A Productive Economy	To increase investment in Luton's growth-driven sectors including advanced manufacturing, digital technology, creative and cultural industries and professional services.
	To maximise the opportunities from the expansion of Luton Airport to unlock investment in advanced manufacturing, logistics and digital sectors within Green Horizons Park.
	To increase inward investment flows, including international investment and position Luton as a town with global connections.
	To support Luton's businesses to be more innovative through the adoption of new digital technologies and access to innovation funding and support
	To support Luton's role as a key driver of economic growth within the South Midlands.
An Inclusive Economy	To ensure that all Lutonians of all ages have access to skills and training opportunities which enable them to access a good job and remain in Luton.
	To improve quality of life and wellbeing of Luton residents and ensure that barriers to employment have reduced
	To ensure that children and young people are inspired to create a future for themselves within the town
	To improve collaboration and partnerships between business, organisations and educational providers
A Resilient Economy	To create a vibrant and diverse town centre, which attracts new visitors through high quality placemaking and celebration of the town's diversity
	To ensure that more young families and talented professionals are attracted to live and remain in Luton
	To provide a range of employment spaces suitable for new businesses including start-up and grow on units including affordable workspace
	To ensure that Luton residents benefit from good quality, affordable and appropriate housing and services
	To ensure that Luton has the right physical and digital infrastructure required to enable economic growth.

Alongside this work, through the South Midlands authorities, a regional economy strategy is also being produced. This work will support our future work on a devolution deal for the area. At the subregion, we are engaged in conversations about devolution and Luton's economic assets of strategic and regional significance will support the wider economic geography. This has seen recent local successes, such as the estimated 2,500 jobs that will be created at junction 10a upon completion, and we are close to securing 500 engineering jobs at Luton Airport. Other local successes we have seen include CAMRA head office moving to Luton bringing 51 new jobs to Luton, Clore Leadership moving its headquarters to Luton as part of the Art's Council's Transfer Programme, and Planetarium Go basing their headquarters here. At national level, the Economic Growth Strategy is set within the context of the Government's 'Economic Growth Mission' and the development of the emerging industrial Strategy.

The recent announcement by Stellantis that they are closing their Vauxhall plant in Luton is a significant blow to our town and those families directly impacted. The closure means a loss of 1168 jobs and £300 million per annum from the local economy. Other knock-on impacts include a potential reduction in jobs from supply chains, skills development work (of which Vauxhall played a key role) and in local business stimulus.

Luton will bounce back as we always do, but not without some hard work. We are currently working with unions, local management and government, seeking a solution that will enable us to retain part of the plant. If plan A is not successful, plan B is to work with central government to leverage the opportunity the site presents.

FUTURE WORK

We are currently finalising the draft strategy internally and with key stakeholders ready for extensive engagement in January. The strategy and implementation plan will be finalised in February and formally begins the council process for sign off and adoption.

This work will kick-start:

- Refresh of the skills plan in line with the development of the EGS to ensure alignment with employment pathways.
- Refocus the role and potential of anchor institutions to support economic growth through a new framework (some of this work is already underway).
- Strengthen the alignment between Luton Rising and Economic Development.
- Visitor Economy plan and night-time economy plan (some work already underway).
- The strategy will be presented to the Inclusive Economy Board on the 11th December before going through Luton Council's governance process, ending with Executive approval on 22nd April 2025.
- Finalise the regional economic strategy and work to begin on a devolution deal for the area.

Beyond this we are currently working up our response to the news that Vauxhall plans to close the plant in Luton. The Council are committed to not letting the plant close without a fight, in order to maintain the 1,168 jobs, as well as the 2,500 people impacted in the supply chain, and the £300million contributed to the local economy.



LUTON 2040



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