Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Business Plan 2025–2028

This Business Plan details the projects and activity undertaken in support of the Council's Corporate Plan priorities.

The Corporate Plan prioritises local community needs and resources are directed toward the things they think are most important. These needs are aligned with other local, regional and national plans to ensure the ambitions set out in our Corporate Plan are realistic and achievable.

The Business Plan covers a three-year period but will be revised and updated annually. Detailed monitoring of progress against key tasks and outcome measures is undertaken regularly by General Management Team and reported to Cabinet on a quarterly basis. In addition, Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will also occasionally receive high level reports on progress against Corporate Plan priorities as required and as part of action planning, target setting and outturn reporting.

The Council's Vision for Broxtowe is 'a greener, safer, healthier Borough where everyone prospers'.

The Council's Priorities are:

- **1. Housing**: A good quality home for everyone
- 2. Business Growth: Invest in our towns and our people
- **3. Environment**: Protect the environment for the future
- 4. **Community Safety**: A safe place for everyone
- 5. Leisure and Health: Healthy and supported communities

The Priorities and Objectives for Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services are 'provide an excellent customer focused service whilst maximising the Council's income collection':

- Assist residents to be financially secure through advice or signposting
- Provide payment options to customers while further developing our preferred online options
- Ensure strong income collection is maintained
- Support Residents with Housing Benefit, Local Council Tax Support and Discretionary Housing Payments

1. Published Strategy and Policy Documents Supporting the Delivery of Priorities and Objectives

Strategy/Policy Document	Purpose of Document	Renewal Date	Responsible Officer/Contact
Corporate Plan	April 2028	Chief Executive	
Business Strategy	 Designed to ensure that the Council is: Lean and fit in its assets, systems and processes Customer focused in all its activities Commercially minded and financially viable Making best use of technology 	Updated annually	Deputy Chief Executive
Medium Term Financial Strategy	The Council's key financial planning document. In detailing the financial implications of the Corporate Plan, the MTFS provides a reference point for corporate decision-making and helps to ensure that the Council can optimise the balance between its financial resources and the delivery of its priorities. The MTFS informs the annual budget-setting process, ensuring that each year's budget is considered within the context of the Council's ongoing sustainability over the entirety of the planning period	Updated annually	Deputy Chief Executive Head of Finance Services
Capital Strategy	An overarching summary document which encompasses all capital and treasury activity including the capital programme, financing planning, accounting policies and asset management	Updated annually	Deputy Chief Executive Head of Finance Services

Strategy/Policy Document	Purpose of Document	Renewal Date	Responsible Officer/Contact
Corporate Debt Policy	Provides a statement of fairness and intent	June 2026	Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services
Benefit Overpayments and Recovery Policy	Explains the service intentions when an overpayment of benefit has been made and the subsequent processes of recovery	June 2026	Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services
Discretionary Rate Relief policy guidelines	Highlights the priorities for supporting business through discretionary rate relief and hardships relief	August 2025	Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services
Local Council Tax Support Scheme	Sets out the rules governing the calculation and award of local council tax support	Each year in January	Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services
Council Tax Discretionary Discounts S13A Policy	Provides a set of guidelines for the creation of discretionary council tax discounts	On changes to relevant legislation	Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services
Service Level Agreement with Ashfield District Council	Sets out NNDR partnership agreement with Ashfield	Reviewed annually	Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services
Customer Services Strategy	Summarise and set out the detail of the Customer Services Strategy	March 2026	Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services
Customer Services Training Strategy	Set out the Department's vision for maintaining and enhancing the skills and capabilities of staff	Reviewed regularly	Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services
Counter-fraud policy documents	Sets out the Council's approach to protecting its assets from fraud	On changes to relevant legislation	Deputy Chief Executive Chief Audit and Control Officer

Strategy/Policy Document	Purpose of Document	Renewal Date	Responsible Officer/Contact
Council Tax Care Leavers Discretionary Discount	Sets out the Council's guidelines to assisting care leavers within the Borough through Council Tax reductions	Reviewed Annually in January	Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services
Service Level Agreement with Newark and Sherwood District Council	Sets out the Partnership in relation to Business Rates Property Inspectors	September 2026	Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services

2. Service Level Objectives Linked to Corporate Objectives

Revenues

- Revenue Collection
 - Billing, collection and recovery of all the Council's locally raised revenues Council Tax, Non Domestic Rates and Sundry Debts
 - Accurate and timely completion of the key government and pool returns: National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR), Council Tax Base (CTB) and Quarterly Return of Council Taxes (QRC)
 - Provide accurate financial and statistical data to the Council and Government
 - Canvass, inspect and process correspondence to maintain records to support accurate and timely billing and recovery processes
 - Partner with the Citizens Advice Broxtowe to ensure the effective implementation of Universal Credit and support residents with debt issues
 - In line with the digital strategy deliver on line payment facilities that customers consider payment channels of choice

Benefits

Benefits

- Assessing and paying Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support (CTS) in an accurate and timely manner
- Provide benefit advice to members of the public
- Calculating Housing benefit and CTS overpayments
- Accurate and timely completion of the relevant Housing Benefit subsidy returns
- Lead the Council's approach to welfare reform providing information training and technical briefings to members and senior management
- Provide the single point of contact for liaison with the DWP's single fraud investigation service

Quality and Control

- Quality and Control
 - Bill, collect and recover all Sundry Debts owed to the Council
 - Manage the claim and assessment process for Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP)
 - Prepare and represent the council at Appeal Tribunals and DHP member panels
 - Provide key relevant financial reconciliations
 - Recover Housing Benefit overpayments

Customer Services

Customer Services

- Be the Council's first point of contact for face-to-face and telephone contact
- The provision of effective customer access channels, with emphasis on channel shift through automation and enabling of online self-service
- The provision of inbound telephony services and face to face interviews for a range of high volume services
- Improving the quality of transactions by increasing the percentage of enquiries answered at first point of contact, reducing queuing and average handling times and increasing the range of services provided

Legal Services

- Legal Services
 - Provide support with resolving debt collection where the legal process is required to be followed to recover debt

Housing

- Housing
 - Assist tenants to remain in their homes working together with the Financial Inclusion Team to ensure financial stability

Rent

- > Rent
 - Work with the Tenants Sustainability and Inclusion Officer to enable tenants to remain in their home and manage rent payments

3. Measures of Performance and Service Data

Context - Baseline Service Data

Service Data / Description	Actual 2021/22	Actual 2022/23	Actual 2023/24	Comments including benchmarking data
Total Council Tax Collected FRLocal_10	£70.2m	£74.1m	£80.3m	Expected collection increases in line with the increase in charge.
Total Business Rates Collected FRLocal_11	£24.0m	£28.8m	£27.1m	The amount collected is reflective of the amount charged and a collection rate of 97.8%
Total Sundry Debtors Collected FRLocal_12	£3.7m	£4.8m	£3.9m	The level of Sundry Debtors recovered remains consistent with previous years.
Total Council Tax Liability Orders granted FRLocal_13	1,941	2,551	2,878	The level of liability orders granted reflects the increased recovery work being conducted.
Total Business Rates Liability Orders granted FRLocal_14	97	160	162	The level of liability orders granted reflects the increased recovery work being conducted.
Total support/benefit paid FBData_01	£22.2m	£21.0m	£21.3m	The government provided an initiative to support those with the rising cost of living which focused on those receiving Council Tax Support meaning an increase in the support provided.

Service Data / Description	Actual 2021/22	Actual 2022/23	Actual 2023/24	Comments including benchmarking data
Benefit claims received FBData_03	1,397	2,247	2,039	Following a rise in 2022 due to the rising cost of living, the number of applications received has reduced and we expect this to continue with the role out of Universal Credit.
Changes of Circumstances received FBData_11	26,477	26,940	25,284	It is expected that the level of changes processed will continue to reduce in line with the role out of Universal Credit.
Applications for DHP FBData_07	367	437	386	The levels of applications received have reduced following the reduction of Cost of Living support.
Appeals received FBData_09	6	6	3	With accurate decisions being made, the number of appeals received remains low and consistent.
Calls offered (Total demand for calls, i.e. those answered and abandoned in both the Contact Centre and in the back offices) CSData_01	101,039	94,633	76,743	The number of calls has reduced due to the fact that Housing Repairs calls are now managed within the Housing Repairs Team.
Calls Answered (Answered in Contact Centre) CSData_02	62,775	73,170	58,175	The reduction in calls answered is a result of the removal of Housing Repairs Calls.

Critical Success Indicators (CSI)

Priority leaders should work corporately to **define** the **outcome objective** for each priority area and **identify an outcome indicator** or indicators which will be **Critical Success Indicators**. There will be a maximum of two CSI for each corporate priority.

Indicator Description	Achieved 2021/22	Achieved 2022/23	Achieved 2023/24	Target 2024/25	Target 2025/26	Future Years	Indicator Owner and Comments (incl. benchmarking)
Council Tax collected in year % (BV9)	96.97%	97.42%	97.63%	98.5%	98.5%	98.5%	Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services The target is based on the collection within the year of charge. With the introduction of aspects such as Breathing Space and the impact of the rising cost of living, the team have been unable to return to prepandemic levels. The remaining amounts are still actively recovered and percentages collected are in excess of the target. When compared with other authorities in the East Midlands the Council ranks 12th

Indicator Description	Achieved 2021/22	Achieved 2022/23	Achieved 2023/24	Target 2024/25	Target 2025/26	Future Years	Indicator Owner and Comments (incl. benchmarking)
Non-domestic rates collected in the year % (BV10)	97.42%	98.77%	97.64%	98.5%	98.5%	98.5%	Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services
							The percentage collection rate in 2023/24 was impacted by a large increase in charge in March 2024 but was not paid until April 2024. Without this change, the collection rate would have been approximately 98.5% and in line with target.
							Compared with other local authorities in the East Midlands the Council was ranked 19th out of 29 in 2023/24.
% of DHP contribution compared to DWP grant	118%	118%	143%	100%	100%	100%	Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services
(FRLocal_15)							The Council's DHP contribution from central government has been significantly reduced and as a result it is likely that the Council will be required to top up the amounts to support the most vulnerable.
							The Council was provided an additional amount of funding through Nottinghamshire County Council's Household Support Fund which allowed an increase in expenditure above the 100% DWP contribution.

Indicator Description	Achieved 2021/22	Achieved 2022/23	Achieved 2023/24	Target 2024/25	Target 2025/26	Future Years	Indicator Owner and Comments (incl. benchmarking)
Number of Self-Service payments transactions to the Council (Including both online and Automated Telephone Payments (ATP) (Customer Services) (CSLocal_14)	59,537	59,179	78,869	71,000	75,000	75,000	Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Online transactions will continue to be promoted as the best method of communicating with the Council. This performance measure has been updated and the data has been
							recalculated from 2023/24 to include both Self-Service and Automated Telephone Payments. The 2023/24 data has been recalculated for reference.

Other Performance Indicators

Priority leaders are to identify two sets of performance indicators namely **Key Performance Indicators (KPI)** for reporting to GMT/Members and **Management Performance Indicators (MPI)** for use in business planning and performance monitoring purposes at a service level.

Key Performance Indicators (KPI)

Indicator Description	Achieved 2021/22	Achieved 2022/23	Achieved 2023/24	Target 2024/25	Target 2025/26	Future Years	Indicator Owner and Comments (incl. benchmarking)
Average time (days) to process Benefit claims (BV78a)	8.8	7.9	7.2	9.0	9.0	9.0	Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services The Council's performance is in the upper
							quartile for the Country
Average time (days) to process Benefit change of	4.5	4.6	4.4	4.0	4.0	4.0	Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services
circumstances (BV78b)							The Council's performance is in the upper quartile for the Country
Housing Benefit Overpayments (HBO)	26.49%	26.40%	23.61%	25%	25%	25%	Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services
recovered as a percentage of the total amount of HBO outstanding (BV79b(ii))							With the rising cost of living, the team are giving greater consideration to the recovery of overpayments to ensure we do not put households in to hardship.
Calls handled (Answered in Contact Centre)	62,775	73,170	58,175	60,000	60,000	60,000	Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services
(CSData02)							The service has experienced change in relation to Housing Repairs calls being handled within the Housing Team. This will reduce the volume of calls being received by the Customer Services Team and, as a result, limit the number of calls that can be handled by the team.

Indicator Description	Achieved 2021/22	Achieved 2022/23	Achieved 2023/24	Target 2024/25	Target 2025/26	Future Years	Indicator Owner and Comments (incl. benchmarking)
Switchboard Calls Answered (CSData11)	-	45,754	45,299	48,500	48,500	48,500	Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Data only collected for full year in 2022/23. The target is based on ensuring an abandonment rate of less than 5%.

Management Performance Indicators (MPI)

Indicator Description	Achieved 2021/22	Achieved 2022/23	Achieved 2023/24	Target 2024/25	Target 2025/26	Future Years	Indicator Owner and Comments (incl. benchmarking)
Council tax payers paying by Direct Debit (FRLocal_01)	73.0%	70.1%	71.0%	72%	72%	72%	Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services The achieved performance is almost at saturation point. Work will continue to increase the number of Direct Debit payers.
Council tax written off as 'not collectable' as a proportion of the gross debit (FRLocal_06)	0.27%	0.20%	0.35%	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services The Council only writes off balances that it has exhausted all recovery options for.
NNDR written off as not collectable as a proportion of the gross debit (FRLocal_07)	0.19%	0.42%	0.28%	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services The Council only writes off balances that it has exhausted all recovery options for.
Housing Benefit Overpayments written off (BV79B(iii))	9.65%	12.57%	10.07%	10%	12%	12%	Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services The target has been increased due to the changing landscape of Housing Benefit and the removal of automatic recovery for those moving to Universal Credit.

Indicator Description	Achieved 2021/22	Achieved 2022/23	Achieved 2023/24	Target 2024/25	Target 2025/26	Future Years	Indicator Owner and Comments (incl. benchmarking)
Recoverable Housing Benefit Overpayments that are recovered during period (BV79B(i))	132.98%	122.28%	94.96%	95%	95%	95%	Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Performance in the area has improved due to less overpayments being created as customers move on to Universal Credit.
Outstanding sundry debtors at year end (FPLocal_10)	£1.7m	£1.7m	£1.5m	£1.6m	£1.6m	£1.7m	Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services This is the level of debt outstanding at the end of the financial year. The target reflects inflation.
Sundry debtors collected in year as a proportion of the annual debit (FPLocal_02)	86.7%	85.4%	85.83%	90%	90%	90%	Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Anticipated that performance in this area will be impacted by COVID and will take several years to return to earlier levels.

4. Key Tasks and Priorities for Improvement 2025/26 – 2027/28 Including Commercial Activities

Priority leaders are asked to consider potential **commercial activities** in their priority areas when setting the key tasks and priorities for the next three years. In doing so priority leaders should consider:

- In which service areas could new commercial activities be undertaken?
- How much additional income could be generated from the new commercial activities?
- Would additional resources (employees, equipment, systems etc.) be needed to undertake the new commercial activities? If yes, outline these with estimates of costs.
- How will these new commercial activities link into the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy, Capital Programme, Business Strategy and Commercial Strategy?
- Will the new commercial activities affect existing Revenue and Capital budgets? If yes, then remember to include the net income or costs to Section 5 'Link Key Tasks and Priorities for Improvement to the Financial Budgets'.
- Please identify new 'commercial activities' in the comments column.

Action	Targeted Outcome	Partnership / Procurement Arrangement	Officers Responsible / Target Date	Budget Implications / Efficiencies / Other comments
Manage the introduction of Universal Credit (UC) RBCS1620_01	Transfer of working age HB claims to UC will be administered by the DWP	Other council departments, system suppliers and DWP	Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services March 2026	The roll out of UC continues and will reduce the amount paid out by the Council. This will impact on the Subsidy amounts that can be claimed.
Manage the Introduction of Housing Element within Pension Credit RBCS2528_01 (New)	Transfer of pension age HB claims to Pension Credit will be administered by the DWP.	Other council departments, system suppliers and DWP	Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services March 2026	The Roll out of HB in to Pension Credit will reduce resource requirement and the amount of subsidy amounts that can be claimed.

Action	Targeted Outcome	Partnership / Procurement Arrangement	Officers Responsible / Target Date	Budget Implications / Efficiencies / Other comments
Implement the updated Customer Services Strategy with focus on the updated reception area RBCS1620_06	To create a modern welcoming environment for customers.	Work with partners and other council departments.	Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services April 2025	The Council has set a budget to allow the redevelopment of the reception area.
Business Rates Review BCS2023_01	To review the relevant Rateable Value (RV) of Businesses.	Working with Newark and Sherwood District Council (NSDC) and Analyse Local to review the Rateable Values	Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services September 2026	Contract with NSDC will cost £20k per annum. Analyse Local will charge a 10% of any RV that they identify as an increase. Any amounts payable will be linked to an increase in the Business rates collectable. Analyse Local will also provide software that will allow greater analysis of the Business Rates data at a cost of £2k per annum, which is now within the existing budget. Discussions are taking place on the basis of extending this contract for a further two years until September 2026

Action	Targeted Outcome	Partnership / Procurement Arrangement	Officers Responsible / Target Date	Budget Implications / Efficiencies / Other comments
implement O OpenChannel, gi subject to fu	OpenChannel module using the relevant procurement Benefits and	using the relevant procurement	Customer Services	Promoting online facilities allowing integration with the back office system. Initial quotations provided with further evaluation required.
RBCS2124_01			Efficiencies to be made through reduction in hours as a result of reduced need for re-keying information and reduced calls made to the Contact Centre.	
				Discussions continue with software provider around the overall contract negotiations.
Email Connect RBCS2225_02	To implement the Information@work email connect module, providing automatic referencing of emails received.	Working with Information@work	Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services March 2026	Information@work have provided a quote of £13,400. This additional software will only become available once the Council upgrades to the latest version of Information@work, which will not be available until 2024/25.

Action	Targeted Outcome	Partnership / Procurement Arrangement	Officers Responsible / Target Date	Budget Implications / Efficiencies / Other comments
Single Person Discount Review RBCS2528_02 (New)	To review all Single Person Discount accounts on Council Tax	Nottinghamshire Countywide project using relevant procurement framework	Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services October 2025	The process will aim to reduce the number of Single Person Discounts that are being claimed in error or through fraudulent means. The process risk scores each account based on credit information.
				The exercise is outsourced to an external provider, previously NEC, with little impact on the Council Tax Team.
				The cost of the scheme is contributed to by each major precepting authority with Broxtowe picking up approximately 9% of the cost and benefit.
Review of Council Tax Exemptions RBCS2528_03 (New)	To review the level of Council Tax exemptions and recommend potential improvements to promote a return to use for empty properties	Working with relevant Council departments and elected members.	Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services March 2026	The Council currently has discretion to provide certain exemptions and discounts on properties that are unoccupied or uninhabitable. A review of these exemptions could promote a return to use for these properties.
				In addition to this, we will also look to review the potential levy's that can be applied to properties that are either empty for a significant amount of time or are classed as second properties.

5. Link Key Tasks and Priorities for Improvement to the Financial Budgets

Priority leaders should ensure that key tasks and priorities (including commercial activities) that have a financial implication are included in the analysis below.

Revenue and Capital Budget Implications/Efficiencies Generated	Action	2025/26 Budget £	2026/27 Budget £	2027/28 Budget £
Budget Implications				
Business Rate Review	RBCS2023_01	20,000	20,000	20,000
Email Connect*	RBCS2225_02	0	0	0
Single Person Discount Review	RBCS2528_02	4,000	0	5,000
Efficiencies Generated				
Evaluate and implement OpenChannel*	RBCS2124_01	TBC	TBC	TBC
Email Connect*	RBCS2225_02	20,000	20,000	20,000
New business/increased income				
Business Rate Review	RBCS2023_01	50,000	50,000	50,000
Single Person Discount Review	RBCS2528_02	16,000	0	18,000
Review of Council Tax Exemptions	RBCS2528_03	15,000	50,000	50,000
Net Change in Revenue Budgets		*Note	*Note	*Note

^{*} Budget implications to be considered and confirmed once project business cases have been finalised.

6. Summary of Key Risks

Priority leaders have identified three strategic risks for the Business area and ensured that these are considered in the Council's Strategic Risk Register.

Key Strategic Risk	Action to be taken or required to mitigate/minimise the risk or threat	
Failure to mitigate the impact of the Government's welfare reform agenda	The Council will continue to work with the DWP, DLUHC and CAB to ensure the Welfare Reform Agenda is implemented successfully for the people of the borough.	
Corporate and/or political leadership adversely impacting upon service delivery	Working with GMT and political leaders to ensure that relevant guidance is given at appropriate times.	

The top five risks (strategic or operational) arising from the key tasks and priorities for improvement have also been identified. As part of the project planning process for each key task detailed risk analyses will be undertaken and mitigation actions identified. It is anticipated that there will be 'common themes' identified that are covered by Strategic Risks.

Key Task	Risk or Threat to Key Task	Covered by an existing Strategic Risk?	Action taken/required to mitigate/minimise the risk or threat
Universal Credit introduction RBCS1620_01	DWP will remove significant resources despite the Council still administering CTS and HB for pension age	Yes – Risk 16	Local Authorities must protect their interests to ensure sufficient employees and resources remain to provide service
	Paying claimant direct will impact on rent and council tax collection.		More time, effort and money will have to be spent on collecting Council Tax.
Business Rates Review RBCS2023_01	Conduct a thorough review of the Business Rates properties within the Borough	Yes - Risk 9	Working with Newark and Sherwood to provide Property Inspectors

Key Task	Risk or Threat to Key Task	Covered by an existing Strategic Risk?	Action taken/required to mitigate/minimise the risk or threat
Manage the Introduction of Housing Element within Pension Credit. RBCS2528_01	Reduction in resources as we manage the migration to Pension Credit.	Yes – Risk 16	Local Authorities must protect their interests to ensure sufficient employees and resources remain to provide service More time, effort and money will have to be spent on collecting Council Tax
Single Person Discount Review RBCS2528_02	Review all Single Person Discount accounts	Yes – Risk 9	Countywide project
Review of Council Tax Exemptions RBCS2528_03	To ensure the maximum Council Tax charge is in place to promote housing.	Yes- Risk 9	Review the current exemptions

Risks as extracted from the Strategic Risk Register as at February 2025:

Risk 9 Failure to maximise collection of income due to the CouncilRisk 16 Failure to mitigate the impact of the Government's welfare reform agenda

The latest Strategic Risk Register is available in full at https://intranet.broxtowe.gov.uk/finance/risk-management/