

Council Plan summary report

Bradford Council, working alongside partners, business and communities, delivers services and democratically accountable leadership to a diverse population of over half a million people and around 16,000 businesses and strives to secure better outcomes and equality of opportunity for everyone. It employs over 8,000 staff, 82% of whom make their home here representing a significant asset rooted in our communities.

The Bradford District is big, the 5th biggest urban Local Authority District in the UK; it's young – the youngest in the UK with nearly a third of the population aged under 20; and it's diverse – ethnic minorities form a third of the population with over 150 languages spoken within the District. Geographically, it is home to the city of Bradford itself, the large town of Keighley and a number of smaller towns and villages many with strong and distinctive identities.

Outstanding landscapes complement historically important architecture alongside a rich cultural heritage and vibrant contemporary cultural scene which together attract 10 million visitors a year.

The District's scale, diversity, innovation and productive potential are reflected in its strong and broad-based business community which is part of an overall economy worth £9.5 billion, the 11th largest in England. We are proud to be identified as the best place in Britain to start a business, named as one of the Sunday Times' top 20 places to do business, and identified as the most improved city in the Price Waterhouse Cooper's Good Growth 2019 Index.

The District is home to high-value production businesses across a wide range of sectors including food manufacturing, engineering, chemicals, digital technologies, energy and utilities. Many businesses in the District support international supply chains in sectors such as automotive, construction, finance and health, making us one of the most internationally connected cities in the UK. Our University is a hive of technological innovation.

Public services and the voluntary and community sector have a strong track record of working together in mature and effective partnerships and the District's work to bring communities together and promote participation is among the most innovative to be found anywhere in the world.

So the Council and its partners have plenty of assets to work with, however the District, like anywhere of its size and complexity, faces some significant and persistent challenges.

- **Poverty:** Whilst we have some of the wealthiest areas in northern England, Bradford is the 5th most income deprived District in the country. Some 266,000 people live in the poorest areas and nearly one third of our children are living in poverty. Fuel poverty affects over 13.5% of households. Health inequalities persist and the gap in life expectancy between the wealthiest and poorest areas of the District is around nine years for men and around eight years for women. These levels of poverty and inequality are unacceptable and generate demand for public services.

- **Connectivity:** We need to do more to improve transport connectivity to Bradford, Keighley and Shipley. Bradford is the largest city in the UK not on a mainline rail station and travel times are too long between all parts of the District and the wider north.
- **Education and skills:** While progress has been made in closing the gap in educational attainment between Bradford and the national average it has not gone far enough or fast enough and the adult skills base remains relatively low which affects productivity and potential inward investment decisions.
- **Resources:** The Council has limited ability to raise income locally. Our Band D Council tax is 8% below the average for Metropolitan authorities and 80% of our households are below Band D. However, the District is home to high levels of need and demand for public services.

Living with COVID-19

In recent months, the Coronavirus pandemic has presented additional challenges and tests to our organisation, communities, public sector partners and businesses.

COVID-19 has intensified the deep inequalities that already existed in our society. The Coronavirus pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on our most disadvantaged people, including young people in the District, large and persistently deprived communities, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME), women, migrants, people in poverty and the elderly. As we are UK's youngest city we are understandably concerned about the impact the COVID-19 lockdown has had on children's health and future prospects. Addressing this is a key priority for the next four years.

The full implications of COVID-19 on the District and its economy are still to be fully understood. Modelling commissioned by the West Yorkshire Economic Recovery Board demonstrates the significant impact this crisis could have on businesses and communities. Even in the event of a relatively strong recovery, the District economy is still set to shrink by up to 10% in 2020. If we see a slower uneven recovery, modelling suggests our economy could shrink by almost 30% by the end of 2021. This will have an impact not only on businesses in the District, but people's jobs and livelihoods.

The way in which we deliver Council services and operate has changed during lockdown. Aside from front line positions, most of our staff and members are now working remotely with video conferencing replacing physical Council meetings. The pandemic has affected our overall financial position significantly. There are many new costs in tackling the pandemic and increased demand in a range of services. Alongside these new cost pressures, our ability to raise income and funds collected in fees and charges has reduced.

Our Priority Outcome Areas

This Council Plan will help set the priorities and inform our future budgets and medium-term financial strategies. At the heart of this is a fair, inclusive and sustainable recovery. Each of our priority areas are divided into two sections in terms of activity:

a) Living with COVID-19 – how we help our residents, businesses and places overcome the ongoing challenges presented by COVID-19.

b) Building a Better Future – how we work to secure a better long-term future for the District, its people, communities and businesses.

Our priority areas are as follows:

- **Better Skills, More Good Jobs and a Growing Economy** - We will grow our local economy in an inclusive and sustainable way by increasing productivity and supporting businesses to innovate, invest and create great jobs in the District.
- **Decent Homes** - We want everyone in the District to have a comfortable home which meets their needs and helps them lead fulfilling lives.
- **Good Start, Great Schools** - We will help our children to have the best start in life by improving educational attainment for all young people.
- **Better Health, Better Lives** – We will help people from all backgrounds to lead long, happy and productive lives by improving their health and socio-economic wellbeing.
- **Safe, Strong and Active Communities** – We want Bradford District to be a place where everyone can play a positive role in the community and feel proud to call it their home.
- **A Sustainable District** – We will make it easier for individuals, households and businesses in the District to adapt, change and innovate to address the challenges of climate change.
- **Well-Run Council** – We will be a Council that is a great place to work and reflects the communities we serve. Our people will have the tools to do their jobs effectively. We will manage our resources well and seize all opportunities to bring funding into the District. We will provide good, accessible services.

Our work will be underpinned by the following cross-cutting principles:

Equalities must be at the heart of all we do: To secure the benefits of diversity we are building an inclusive organisation that actively recognises the contribution that people from different backgrounds make to all aspects of the Council’s work and the District’s communities. Our equality objectives are published alongside this Plan and feature across our outcome areas.

Embedding prevention and early help across the system: This means we will support people early and in their communities to prevent their needs from escalating and to improve their outcomes. This will reduce demand on statutory services and demonstrate return on investment of localised prevention and early help. It will also enable and grow the strength in communities to support each other to survive and thrive.

Every pound counts: We will adopt effective and value-for-money approaches to service delivery. We will increase the proportion of Council resources spent in the District to help grow the economy and develop our local supply chains. We will ensure that services are creative, innovative and effective to provide the best outcomes for our residents and businesses. Working with others to across the District, we will ensure we get the best and most effective value for every pound spent.

Working together: We will collaborate as a Council with other public sector organisations and our communities to ensure residents and businesses across the District have the best opportunity to reach their potential. Together we will be strong, creative, innovative and effective, delivering the very best services for all. We recognise no single body or agency can achieve our priority outcomes alone and partnership and co-production will be central to success.

Living Well: We will work alongside our communities and our partners in the NHS, independent sector and VCS, to embed the Bradford's Living Well, whole systems' approach to improving health and wellbeing for all across the District. With energy and commitment, we will actively pursue the Living Well mission - to make it easier for people in the District to adopt healthier lifestyle behaviors' - and in doing so, to reduce preventable health conditions, (including childhood obesity), reduce premature deaths and increase the number of years that people in the Bradford District live in good health and wellbeing.