

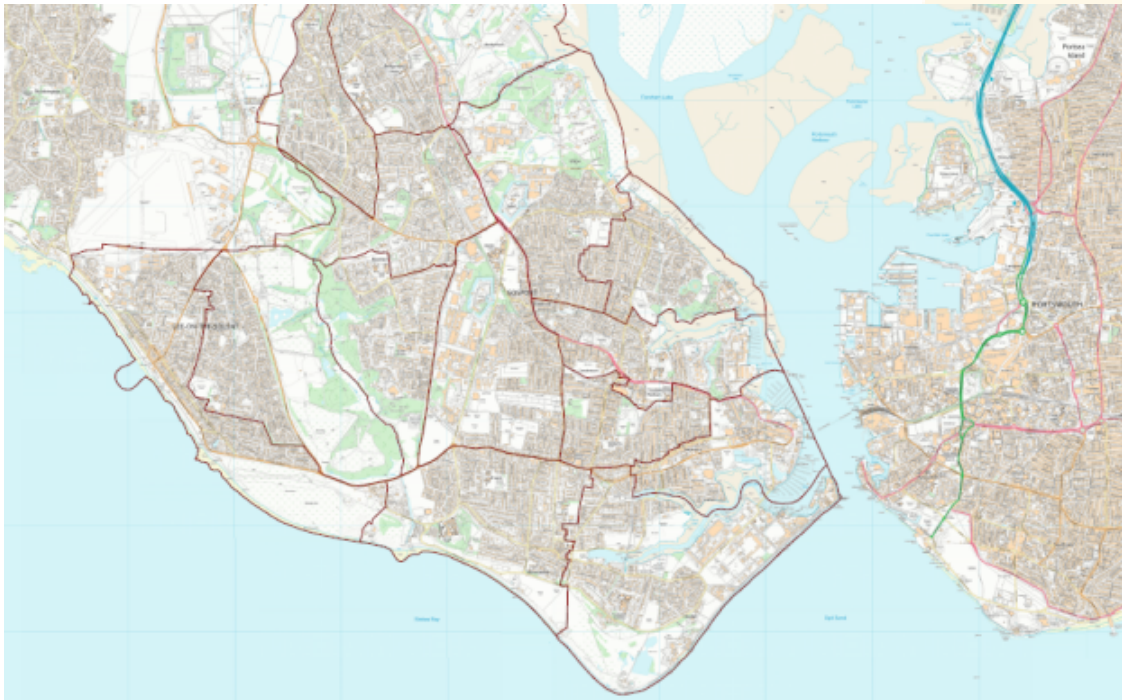


Productivity in Local Government

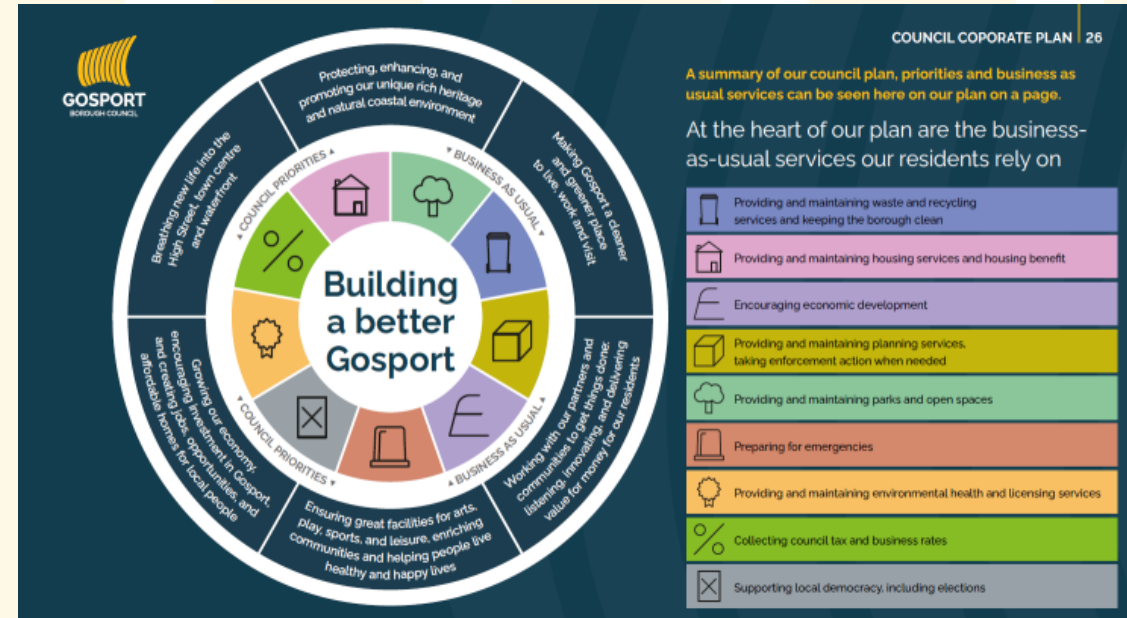
Response from Gosport Borough Council

June 2024

Gosport at a glance



- 85,000 residents
- 3,063 GBC owned Social Housing properties
- 232 GBC employees
- 10.6 square miles
- 24 miles of coastline
- DLUHC £18m LUF 3 award 2024
- UKSPF 1million
- Solent Enterprise Zone and Retained Business rates
- **23% population aged 60 +**
- **20% of population ages 16 or under**
- **81.5% of 16-60 year olds economically active**
- **Opportunities - Rebalancing of the economy following the on-going release of MOD sites, perception, peninsular location, viability challenges and low land values, indices of deprivation (health, employment density, education attainment)**
- Highest number of heritage sites in a single borough outside London



1. How you have transformed the way you design and deliver services to make better use of resources.

During the ongoing pressures on funding and public finances and significant socio economic considerations. Gosport Borough Council has demonstrated agility and flexibility in ways of working, reduced its workforce by almost a half over the last few years whilst seeking to minimise the impact of services

We are dedicated and committed to -

- Creation and continual development of Partnerships – operational and strategic – e.g. PFSH, Partnership Agreements for service delivery with Portsmouth Unitary Authority, Southampton and Fareham Borough plus Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) creation and successful delivery to date - [Heritage Action Zone \(HAZ\) - Gosport Borough Council](#). We have also moved away from some contractual arrangements and returned to direct service delivery e.g. grounds maintenance.
- Golden thread Strategies Produced with action Plans designed to directly address identified priorities e.g. Infrastructure Investment plan [Infrastructure Investment - Invest In Gosport](#), Council Corporate plan [PowerPoint Presentation \(gosport.gov.uk\)](#), Economic Development [Gosport Economic Development Strategy 2020-2031 - Gosport Borough Council](#), Digital [7. Appendix 1 Gosport the Digital Peninsula Digital Strategy for the Borough.pdf](#) Homelessness Housing Options [Housing Options - Gosport Borough Council](#) – and Cultural Strategies [Gosport Cultural Strategy 2023 - 2032 - Gosport Borough Council](#).
- Ensuring that our budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy are resilient and offer value for money - [Medium Term Financial Strategy - Gosport Borough Council](#) and that our core public services are prioritized and done well.
- Investing our capital budget in resilience schemes that offer saving opportunities and to address key performance measures and geographical challenges – [Capital Strategy - Gosport Borough Council](#)
- Ongoing structural reviews of organization and front facing service areas informed by risk profile (e.g. Streetscene, Housing, Finance) plus individual service area output focused Business Plan preparation to align with budget setting and review process, recruitment reflects priorities and right people in right role approach
- Procurement processes and contractual arrangements – ‘profit sharing’ where both parties benefit from innovative ways of working.
- Flexible working arrangements to deliver our services and attract and retain our valued members of staff.
- Focus on continual risk review and improvement through our – Corporate Governance Group, planned Corporate Peer Challenge.
- Working collaboratively with Citizens Advice Bureau, NHS and other external organisations to maximise output and minimise duplication/confusion.
- Supporting creation and linkage with volunteer groups

2. How you plan to take advantage of technology and make better use of data to improve decision making, service design and use of resources.

Through adoption of our digital strategies we set out our approach to utilise the best fit low risk technology options in our Borough and organisation. In keeping with our internal technology offering, our aim is to ensure we possess a safe, secure, low risk technology environment that aids our team members in delivery of our priorities and facilitates access for our vulnerable residents

We have an organisational 'Get Well' plan and our aim to move all systems to the Cloud on a business continuity risk basis, our focus is on the customer experience and our approach to AI. Agility for users and enhancing the customer experience is at the heart of our corporate Digital Strategy.

Reporting and our ability to interpret data in order to identify risks and opportunities that can be explored further. We have access to data sets through partners that we look to explore further.

We maintain high compliance with GDPR and Data Protection.

Linked to this is our Borough wide plan for ensuring that our Borough is connected digitally and offers the best possible connection and training for our residents. [Free digital training for residents - Gosport Borough Council](#)

Next generation 5G mobile and ultra-fast broadband (100Mbps+) connectivity rolled out across Gosport. - [Infrastructure Investment - Invest In Gosport](#)

Our delivery model ensures that we include our neighbouring authorities for their experience and resource sharing potentials.

- Used £64k of Shared Prosperity Funding to train older people in IT skills to help with isolation along with plans for connectivity totalling over £2m.
- Updated payment mechanism – online payments, modern multi-option car park machines
- A commitment to Citizens Access of our key customer facing services.
- Partnership working to collate, model and analyze data e.g. Project Integra (Waste Management Scheme).
- The authority collects a wide range of data about its own business and performance and this is presented regularly to Boards and made available.
- £100k Grant for Cyber Security
- Ongoing digitalization of paper records to facilitate ease of access and self-service
- Electronic procurement system implemented – Proactis

3. Your plans to reduce wasteful spend within your organisation and systems.

Cost management and spend prioritisation has been a year on year focus. We have a robust and resilient budget. Over the years, there have been a number of unforeseen challenges e.g. reduced income, meaning removal of wasteful spend has been essential to our continued operation.

- In response to austerity cost pressures, the Council has seen a reduction in around half of its workforce. Whilst essential, this has been possible with the shared service arrangements in place with neighbouring councils and other factors. Contributing to this has also been the process of undertaking detailed review of working practices concluding in bold changes. Future plans to look at Productivity Programmes and other Operational Excellence areas of focus are being worked on.
- Invest to save schemes promoted and included in the Capital Programme [Capital Strategy - Gosport Borough Council](#) e.g. investment in solar panels to protect against energy price rises.
- Assess management strategies e.g. Hostel purchases to mitigate against the rising costs of Homelessness. [Housing Options - Gosport Borough Council](#)
- Utilisation of shared key resources from neighbouring authorities to reduce premium spend on short term resource, for example, shared Health & Safety Officer.
- We monitor our budgets, turnover and project progress ensuing governance processes are met. [Medium Term Financial Strategy - Gosport Borough Council](#). We proactively find the most efficient way of utilizing CIL, Section 106 developer contributions and grant funding opportunities.
- We drive accountability through the appropriate channels.
- We consolidate and flex our working space and arrangements, for example, remote working, accommodating the Police and contractors in our Town Hall facility.
- Encourage a culture of improvement through staff appraisal review process.
- Plans to look at specific skills gaps and process mapping e.g. Property.
- We pride ourselves on clear and open communication with our Trade Union. Gosport take the facilitation of this seriously and as a result are pleased to spend 0.04% of our wage bill supporting this activity. – [Trade Union Facility Time - Gosport Borough Council](#)
- EDI spend is proportionate and reflects mandatory requirements and general duty and is focused around staff behaviors and wellbeing. Through our partners, Portsmouth City Council we have adopted an EDI strategy [Equality and Diversity - Gosport Borough Council](#).
- A balanced view is taken to consultancy use – sometimes this is the most efficient way of securing the appropriate skillset and resource in a timely manner

4. The barriers preventing progress that the Government can help to reduce or remove.

- As a small authority we need our staff to develop a wide range of skill sets. We maximise opportunities to develop resilience and harness expertise through the multiple partnership arrangements in place but we are noticing a reducing pool of available resource as people are choosing to leave local government. In order to deliver our capital programme we do sometimes therefore need to engage consultants for short term expert technical knowledge – we recognise that this skill gap comes at a cost premium and does not stay within our organisation. [Capital Strategy - Gosport Borough Council](#). However, this does mean that we are not able to ‘grow our own’ long term resilience with our employees.
- Some of our roles are vacant for extended periods of time due to this skills shortage and our geographic location and it is difficult to compete with London salary ranges. Options for flexible working are explored but it is still difficult to recruit and retain staff with the relevant skills.
- Given the overall financial climate and our funding pressures, and organisational age profile, our headcount numbers are likely to continue reducing. In future we may only be able to deliver statutory services rather than drive proactive, preventative and capacity building measures that may positively influence service demand—especially true for services focused on the most vulnerable and those looking to address our significant areas of deprivation.
- Legislation changes (e.g. waste) are often introduced over an extended period of time with lack of clarity around practical implementation and financial support. Combined with the above, this makes it extremely difficult to react in an agile and timely manner.
- Short term funding cycles also add to these challenges. Longer term financial settlements and timely introduction of guidance would make it easier for us to plan and procure and mobilise service changes in an efficient way.
- External funding bidding process are complicated and resource hungry and the level of detail needed can be costly to pull together with no certainty of successful outcome. When funds are awarded, delivery timescales are extremely challenging, particularly for smaller authorities. Again, a broader scoped and longer term approach with local discretion, based on evidenced need (e.g. indices of deprivation) would enable funding to reach those most in need in a more efficient and timely way meeting multiple objectives e.g. UKSPF, [Gosport Borough Council awarded over £18m in Levelling Up Funding to transform historic waterfront - Gosport Borough Council](#).
- A joined up approach to funding between upper and lower tier authorities would be helpful. Whilst statutory functions are clearly defined, reduced upper tier funding places pressure on lower tier at the local level where there is more direct accountability leading to lower tiers picking up the cost of attempting to plug the gap and ensure services are maintained. Whilst the voluntary sector play an ever important role, blurring of responsibilities creates duplication and lack of clarity for the customer, detrimentally impacting on reputation commutatively.