

LUTON
2040

Moving from vision to reality



Corporate Peer Challenge

Luton Council Position Statement



luton.gov.uk

CONTENTS

Executive summary	3	ORGANISATION AND PLACE LEADERSHIP	
LUTON'S POSITION		A road map to 2040	46
Welcome to Luton	6	Systems leadership	55
Who is who	11	Civic agreement	56
Our strengths and assets	13	Marmot town - Addressing health Inequalities	57
Our greatest challenge	15	Fairness taskforce	58
Drivers of poverty	16	Addressing serious violence	59
The impact of Poverty	18	Reducing unemployment	61
Our response - Luton 2040	21	GOVERNANCE AND CULTURE	
Areas for further development	22	Governance and decision making	63
Corporate Peer Challenge	24	Organisational Culture	69
LGA Review 2018	25	Communications	70
Achievements since 2018	26	Equality, diversity and inclusion	71
LOCAL PRIORITIES AND OUTCOMES		FINANCIAL PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT	
Luton 2040	30	Luton's financial position	74
Growing an inclusive economy	32	Luton's audit position	77
Civic pride	33	CAPACITY FOR IMPROVEMENT	
Arts, culture, heritage and sports	34	Adapting to challenges	79
Town centre	36	People	80
Improving neighbourhoods	37	Transformation	83
Housing	38	Organisational performance management	85
Asylum seekers	39	IT	85
Demand pressures	42	Case study: improvement to children's services	87



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Luton Council's work in the town and relationships with partners are anchored in our vision for Luton in 2040: a place where everyone can thrive and no one has to live in poverty. Our 2040 priorities, which feed into this vision, ensure clarity of purpose towards inclusive economic growth, a town with positive health outcomes for all, a child-friendly Luton, our ongoing journey towards Net Zero and building a strong and empowered community.

This vision for a town free of poverty, both shows Luton's ambitious nature, as well as the ongoing challenges faced by both the council, and our community. Luton has been ravaged by 14 years of austerity, chronic underfunding from central government, Covid-19 and the cost of living crisis. It's not that the challenges facing the town are unique to Luton, it's that Luton faces the sharp end of these national and global challenges.

Yet in the midst of this, Luton is punching above its weight and delivering impressive outcomes for our residents.

OUR STRENGTHS AND ASSETS

Our community; Vision and leadership; Systems leaderships; London Luton Airport; Innovation and dedication; A community-led approach.

Luton's biggest strength is our community - the commitment to Luton and resilience of our diverse, global-majority population makes Luton what it is, enabling us to repeatedly confound expectations in a variety of ways. It is this community, combined with strong political leadership, with town-wide buy in to Luton 2040, and the huge economic asset of London Luton Airport which allows us to tackle the challenges facing out town.

OUR GREATEST CHALLENGE

The challenges faced by Luton can all be viewed through the lens of poverty. Some of these challenges are drivers of poverty, others the result of poverty. Despite child poverty figures dropping from 45 per cent in 2019 to 39 per cent in 2022 the number of people living in destitution in our town is on the rise, with an estimated 7020 people who are unable to afford their housing costs, heat their home or buy essentials.

Drivers of poverty in Luton: Housing; Low paid irregular work; Population growth; Disability and ill health; Inadequate social security and families with high numbers of children; Problematic debt; Lack of central government funding.

Impact of Poverty in Luton: Health inequalities; Problematic debt; Homelessness; Demand pressures; Quality of life.

With such a high number of our population living in destitution, and demand pressures in a variety of areas, the town's resources focus on our most vulnerable, meaning projects and work that would benefit the more 'socially progressed' areas of Luton are not always able to be prioritised - everyone in Luton, whether directly, or indirectly, is impacted by inequitable financial distribution across the UK.



AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT

Within Luton's evolving system, we know there are areas that need further work and development.

We have identified that we need to: further develop our approach to working together with residents; continue to develop partnerships: become more data led: be less self-effacing, shout louder and have bigger regional and national voice; and develop a better working relationship with our new auditor. We know that our resources and systems don't always match our ambition and improvements are required within our council enabling services.

WELCOME

We welcome peers to Luton as we seek to best use our assets to tackle the challenges that face us, and make steps to develop, enabling us to reach our 2040 vision.



LUTON
2040

LUTON'S POSITION



WELCOME TO LUTON

Luton Council's work in the town and relationships with partners are anchored in our vision for Luton in 2040: a place where everyone can thrive and no one has to live in poverty. Our 2040 priorities, which feed into this vision, ensure clarity of purpose towards inclusive economic growth, a town with positive health outcomes for all, a child-friendly Luton, our ongoing journey towards Net Zero and building a strong and empowered community.

This vision, for a town free of poverty, both shows Luton's ambitious nature, as well as the ongoing challenges faced by the council, and our community. To put it bluntly, Luton has been ravaged by 14 years of austerity, chronic underfunding from central government, Covid-19 and the cost of living crisis. This followed the catastrophic impact of the closure of the Vauxhall Car factory in 2002. It's not that the challenges facing the town are unique to Luton, it's that Luton faces the sharp end of these national and global challenges.

Yet in the midst of this, with the second biggest funding gap between resident need and central government funding in the country, Luton is punching above its weight and delivering impressive outcomes for our residents.



THIS IS LUTON

Population

225,300
total
population



55% of the
population
are from
ethnic minority
communities



150
languages
and dialects
spoken



Younger
than average
population



52 people
per hectare
(greater than
some London
boroughs)



Life expectancy:

78.1 for males
(national average 79.6)



82.4 for females
(national average 83.3)



Economy and employment

£33,920
average salary
for Luton jobs



8.5%
unemployment
rate
(4.8% nationally)



£29,258
average annual
full time salary for
Luton residents
(UK average
£31,285)



11,000
direct jobs at
London Luton
Airport with more
through supply
chains



Education

31%

of working age residents hold a degree or equivalent (40% nationally)



1 in 10

working age adults have no formal qualifications



95.4%

of young people are in education, employment or training (93.9% nationally)



6%

attainment gap between Luton pupils and the rest of England at key stage 2



87.5%

of children attend Ofsted rated 'good' or 'outstanding' primary schools



67%

of 16 to 64 year olds are educated to level 2 or above (78% nationally)



Housing

Occupancy:

60.2%

owned



15.8%

social rented



22.6%

private rented



£263,970

average house price (10% increase in the last year)



£1,050

average rent for a 3 bed house in Luton (£800 nationally)



14.6 people

assessed as homeless per thousand of population (6.3% nationally)



A super diverse town with a vibrant mix of culture, skills and languages



The third youngest population in the country with 22 per cent of residents below the age of 15



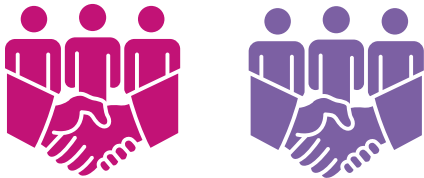
An excellent strategic location, situated between London, Oxford and Cambridge



Outstanding connectivity by road, rail and air- less than 30 minutes from London by rail, close to the M1 and 10 miles from the M25



A cohesive town where people get on well with their neighbours



A strong local economy, with productivity above the national average prior to the pandemic



A town of 225,000 people, with a continuously increasing population



Civic agreement between University of Bedfordshire and Luton Council



A town experiencing **strong wage growth**



Home to the fifth largest airport in the UK- supporting 27,000 jobs, and adding around £1.1 billion to the regional economy



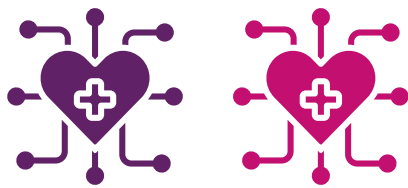
A growing arts, culture and heritage offer with events that celebrate our diverse range of cultures and support greater wellbeing



A dedicated voluntary and community sector that delivers a wide range of crucial services



Effective and efficient health partnerships locally and regionally, led by the Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Integrated Care System



Outstanding access to greenspace – including six green flag parks and close proximity to the Chilterns



Home to Luton and Dunstable University Hospital – providing good and outstanding core services to around 400,000 people in the region



Home to **Premier league Luton Town Football Club**



90% of schools in Luton rated as Good or Outstanding by Ofsted



A strong higher and further education offer through the University of Bedfordshire, Barnfield College and Luton Sixth Form College



WHO IS WHO

Hazel Simmons, Executive Leader

Cllr Hazel Simmons is Leader of Luton Council. Her portfolio as Leader includes Counter Extremism, Prevent and Equalities, and she leads on Luton's 2040 vision to have no-one in Luton living in Poverty by 2040. She has been a councillor in Lewsey Ward since 1991 and Leader since 2007.



Javed Hussain, Deputy Executive Leader

Cllr Javed Hussain is the Deputy Leader of Luton Council. His portfolio oversees sustainable development and highways within the town. He has been a councillor in Luton since 2019 and Deputy Leader since 2023.



Robin Porter, Chief Executive

Robin Porter took over as the Chief Executive for Luton Council in May 2019. Prior to this, he was Deputy Chief Executive and Corporate Director for Customer and Commercial Services at Luton Council, as well as the Lead Officer at London Luton Airport Ltd (LLAL). Before joining Luton Council in 2007 Robin worked as a senior manager in the private sector.



Robin is responsible for the circa 730 services the council delivers to Luton's 225,000 residents, and leading the 2,700 delivering those services.

Mark Fowler, Deputy Chief Executive and Corporate Director Population Wellbeing

Mark has worked in local government since 1991, operating at director level and above for the last 10 years. Prior to his move to Luton Council in February 2022 he was Corporate Director of Community Solutions at Barking and Dagenham Council where he supported communities, families and individuals to become more independent. As the Corporate Director for Population Wellbeing in Luton, Mark oversees services including Housing, Adult Social Care, Transformation, HR, Customer Services, Public Health, and Business Intelligence which are key to the Luton 2040 vision for the town to be healthy, fair and sustainable, where everyone can thrive and no-one has to live in poverty.



Dheeraj Chibber, Corporate Director, Children, Families and Education

Dheeraj was appointed Corporate Director for Children, Families and Education in May 2023, overseeing Children's Social Care, Quality and Improvement, and Education services. Prior to this, Dheeraj was assistant director for children's social care in London Borough of Merton, which achieved outstanding status in an Ofsted ILACS inspection.



Gerard McCleave, Corporate Director, Inclusive Economy

Gerard is our Corporate Director for Inclusive Economy having joined Luton Council in July 2023. Gerard is responsible for our place shaping services: inclusive growth; sustainable development; property and infrastructure; and neighbourhood services.



Nick Platts, Corporate Director and Managing Director, Luton Rising

Nick was appointed Managing Director of Luton Rising, the Luton Council company that owns London Luton Airport and associated assets, in July 2023. Prior to this, Nick had most recently lived and worked in Saudi Arabia for three years, initially as Director of Cargo at Riyadh Airport, and then leading development of the country's first special logistics zone. Prior to this Nick worked at Heathrow Airport.



Nick is responsible for Luton Rising's wide-ranging development and positive social impact programmes, including sustainability, Luton DART, and leading the application for long-term growth at the company's largest asset, London Luton Airport.



OUR STRENGTHS AND ASSETS



Our community, heritage and culture

Luton's biggest strength is our community - the commitment to Luton and resilience of our diverse, global-majority population makes Luton what it is, enabling us to repeatedly confound expectations in a variety of ways. The generosity and support of our community during Covid-19 has birthed ongoing initiatives such as our Food First programme, providing coordination and support to the hundreds of projects that help the most vulnerable of Luton's residents - its website has over 25,000 unique users of the site. As such it was no surprise when JustGiving named Luton the third most generous area in the UK. Faith plays a big part in the life of our community, with 82 per cent of Lutonian's reporting as having a religion in the 2021 census, compared with 63 per cent nationally. Our industrial and global heritage binds our community together and fuels our rich culture of festivals, celebrations and events. Our hat factories, The River Lea, museum collections and our public art are just some of the assets that remind us of this strong heritage and fuel our ambitions for the future.

Vision and leadership

Luton has courageous, strong political leadership and alignment of vision between members and officers. Luton's 2040 vision has cross-party buy-in, allowing all resources and planning to be aligned towards it. This headline vision drives our agenda, and work is ongoing to ensure that everyone in the council's workforce, and more of our wider town partners, understand their unique and important contribution towards Luton 2040.

Systems leaderships

Our shared agenda is held across the town's system, with strong buy-in from anchor institutions such as London Luton Airport, University of Bedfordshire, Luton and Dunstable Hospital and Luton Town FC, as well as nearly 30 other system partners who have taken a 2040 pledge.

This systems-leadership approach is paired with strong, intentional relationships with these key anchor institutions, including the unique civic agreement between Luton Council and the University of Bedfordshire.

London Luton Airport

Luton Council's ownership of the biggest regional economic asset, London Luton Airport, is our key economic driver, enabling us to support our most vulnerable residents despite inadequate financial support from central government. In 2019, the airport supported over 28,400 jobs, generating £1.8 billion in GDP across the UK. Luton Rising, our Airport company, will contribute £28m to fund frontline Council services this year alongside £8.7m that goes directly into the Voluntary and Community Sector. Luton Rising recently submitted their Development Consent Order application to seek approval to grow the Airport from 19m to 32m passengers a year, which if successful will create 11,000 additional jobs, £1.5bn additional economic activity and a further £13m a year invested directly into our voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) organisations.



Innovation and dedication

In the face of regular challenges, our ability to adapt and innovate with projects such as Foxhall Homes and Connect2Luton, and ongoing entrepreneurial work through Luton Rising, allows Luton Council to have a continually balanced budget.

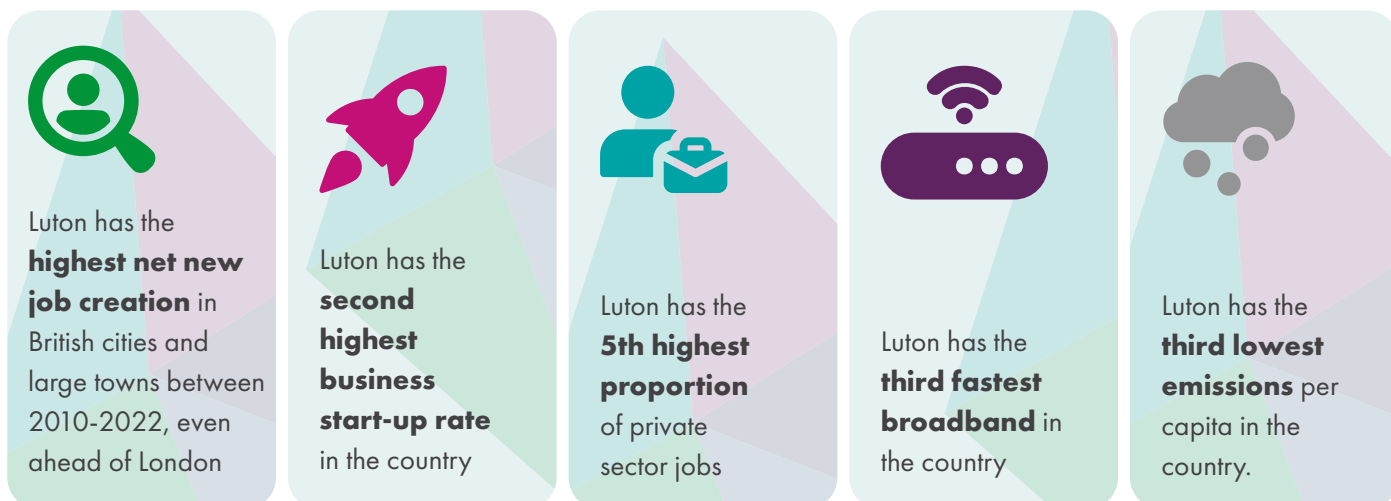
The pride, passion and dedication of Luton Council's workforce enables us to go above and beyond in support of our most vulnerable residents, with projects such as Luton Supporting You. Similarly, we're proud that our diverse workforce is increasingly reflective of our wider Luton community.

A grassroots approach

We have a compassionate and committed voluntary and community sector that supports some of Luton's most vulnerable and is a significant driving force for change within the town. Funding from Luton Rising into the VCFSE is unlike anything else in the country, with 53p per passenger being invested into the town 26 times more than any other UK airport, allowing our voluntary and community sector to thrive despite the uncertain wider context for charitable funding.

A town on the up

Continued economic growth within Luton has been highlighted by the recent Centre for Cities report which showed:



There have been huge causes for celebration in recent years: King Charles' visit to Luton was one of the first community visits of his reign, the celebrations following Luton Town's promotion to the Premier League will live long in the memory, and this year we welcome Radio 1's Big Weekend to Luton.

It is these strengths that drive our resilience in meeting the unique challenges faced in Luton.




OUR GREATEST CHALLENGE

The challenges faced by Luton can all be viewed through the lens of poverty. Some of these challenges are drivers of poverty, others the result of poverty.


Despite child poverty figures dropping from 45 per cent in 2019 to 39 per cent in 2022 the number of people living in destitution in our town rose, with an estimated 7,020 households who are unable to afford their housing costs, heat their home or buy essentials. Our minimum income standard work (below), is based on a similar model from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and allows us to track the financial quality of life of people living across Luton.

Financial Quality of Life Bands	Band	April 2023 estimate	Definition
High Standard of living	A	39,413 Luton households - 49.9% - fall into Bands A & B	Households that can afford all necessities and are financially very comfortable
Good Standard of Living	B	These are all above the Minimum Income Standard and FQOL line - therefore with a good or high standard of living	Households that can afford basic needs, personal services and paid social and cultural activities, being able to participate fully socially and culturally
Financial Quality of Life Line (FQOL)			
Decent Standard of Living	C	23,210 Luton households - 29.4% - in Band C 39,543 Luton households below FQOL threshold 50.1% below FQOL (MIS)	Households that can afford basic needs, but may need to juggle finances to afford insurances, personal services like hairdressing or paid social and cultural activities such as day trips and holidays
Basic Needs (Material Deprivation) Line			
Basic Needs (Material Deprivation)	D	9,313 Luton households - 11.8% - in Band D 16,333 Luton households below Basic Needs threshold 20.7% below Basic Needs	Households that may struggle to pay some basic needs (rent, food, clothing, gas, electric, water, internet and transport costs) and require greater financial support. Much juggling of finances required.
Destitution Line			
Destitution	E	7,020 Luton households below Destitution threshold 8.9% in Destitution	Households that are severely financially stretched and struggle to afford their housing costs, heat their home or buy essentials. Their outgoings significantly outweigh their low incomes, and debt may be a major worry. Many things are unaffordable and there may be a reliance on charities eg. food banks. Physical and mental health may suffer as a consequence.

Analysis of research from Joseph Rowntree Foundation, and tools that we use to monitor change such as our joint strategic needs indicators and our social progress index, have shown us that the main drivers of poverty in Luton are:



Lack of affordable housing



Low paid irregular work



Population growth



Disability and ill health



Inadequate social security and families with high numbers of dependencies



Problematic debt



Lack of central government funding



DRIVERS OF POVERTY

Lack of affordable housing

Although Luton has tended to have lower house prices than surrounding areas, the affordability of homes and rents in the town is a significant problem. The town has a large private rented sector (29 per cent) which is both a route into settled accommodation but also a driver of homelessness due to tenancies ending. The Local Housing Allowance falls far short of actual rents in the town. However, Luton is an attractive location for other boroughs in more expensive areas to relocate people in housing need. Additionally the direct actions of the Home Office who at one point in 2023 had placed over a quarter of the East of England's Asylum seekers in Luton, have hugely exacerbated the housing issues. This has made it harder for Luton Council to secure affordable temporary accommodation, or move on accommodation with private landlords locally.

The poor quality of the private rented sector was recognised by the Institute of Health Equity as a driver of poor health outcomes. Attempts to introduce Additional and Selective Licensing have been hampered by legal challenges but are anticipated to roll out in May 2024.

Low paid work

Over 20 per cent of jobs in Luton generate income below the Living Wage and there is a high prevalence of insecure work and underemployment. The 2024 Centre for Cities Report showed that Luton has the third highest unemployment benefit claimant rate in the country.

Population growth

Since the Census of 2021, there are indications of significant increases to the population. These include approximately 10,000 additional GP registrations in the year to Sept 2023. Much of this growth is a result of global migration, with an increase in National Insurance number applications to 11,912 issued to foreign nationals in Luton in 2023, compared to an average of only 5,670 per year since 2011.

The asylum and refugee landscape across the UK is both complex and challenging, but this is felt particularly keenly in Luton, with a collective recognition of various pressures, impacts and risks for system partners, local people and the asylum seekers themselves.

When considered against the regional and national picture, Luton has a disproportionate volume of refugee asylum seekers based within the town housing 6.5 per cent of the total refugee asylum seeker population of the East of England compared with 3.4 per cent of the overall population, a proportion that is twice that of Bedford and Central Beds. Further to this, when considering Supported Asylum (i.e. removing Afghan and Ukraine schemes) and the accommodation categories with considerably greater impact and risk (i.e. Initial Accommodation, Dispersal Accommodation, Contingency Accommodation), Luton now hosts nearly one sixth of the total East of England asylum population (15.36 per cent). The support available to fund services for this population growth has not been provided.

Disability and ill health

Health outcomes for Luton residents are worse than in the wider population, with life expectancy and healthy life expectancy lower than the national average. On top of this, the percentage of Luton residents listed as disabled under the Equalities Act whose day-to-day-activities are 'limited a lot' is above the national average. Similarly, the percentage of our wider population in the 2021 census who said they were in 'very bad', 'bad', or 'fair' health were all above the national average.

Inadequate social security and families with high numbers of dependencies

A freedom of information request revealed that the two-child limit on universal credit impacts more than 6,000 children in 1,700 families in Luton. The cap, which prevents parents from claiming child tax credit or universal credit for any third or subsequent child born after April 2017, makes families £3,235 a year worse off for each additional child above the limit.

Joseph Rowntree Foundation data shows that the social security system is failing to prevent destitution with the most common source of income for all destitute households being social security benefits (72 per cent). The basic rate of social security is now so low it fails to clear the extremely low-income cash threshold set for destitution.

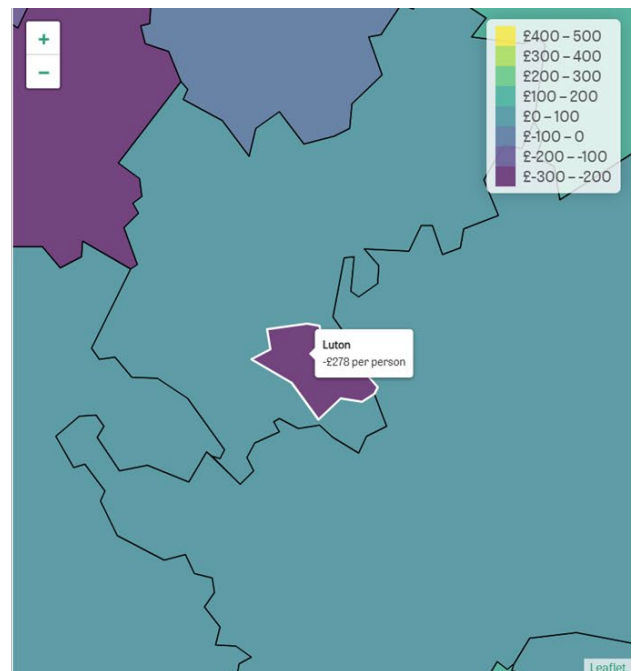
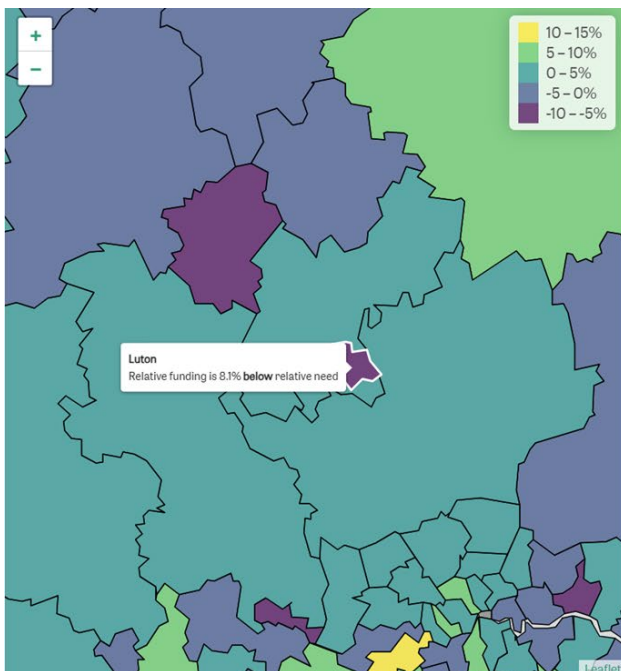
Alongside this we know that people in Luton are not always claiming all the benefits they are entitled to because of lack of understanding or access. Recent work by our Customer Services team highlighting low awareness of pension credit, supported 201 pensioners to claim Pension Credits, increasing their annual income by an average of £9,943 per year a total of £566,753 and when including additional benefits a total of £4.5 million over the life of the project.

Problematic debt

In recent years there have been significant rises in the proportion of adults in Luton holding a high-cost loan (increase of 29 per cent) and relying heavily on credit (increase of 36 per cent). For the town, good credit is becoming less available, as Luton has dropped from the 75th worst local authority for total credit score in 2019 to the 37th worst in 2023, with a drop in credit availability ranking from 137th worst to 84th worse over the same timeframe.

Lack of central government funding

Figures from the Institute for Fiscal studies show that Luton has the second lowest public spending figure on NHS, local government, schools, police and public health compared to the relative need within the town in England, with £278 per person below the perceived need being spent in the town.





THE IMPACT OF POVERTY

Health inequalities

The ONS Health Index places Luton in the bottom 20 per cent of local authorities for health in England.

Life expectancy in Luton is lower than the England average. In the years 2017–19, before the COVID-19 pandemic, life expectancy at birth was more than one year less than the England average for men, and about eight months less for women. Over the last two decades life expectancy in Luton has lagged behind the average for England.

In the period 2018–2020, healthy life expectancy at birth in Luton was 59.2 years for men and 60 years for women. These are just a little lower than the England averages but much lower than places in the UK with the highest healthy life expectancy - such as Rutland with 75 years of healthy life expectancy for men and the Orkney Islands with 77 years of healthy life expectancy for women.

Problematic debt

The prevalence of poverty in the town, combined with the lack of available credit, results in large subprime credit usage within Luton. It is estimated that more than 3,700 people in Luton are in debt to loan sharks. A recent report estimates £20 million has been borrowed from subprime lending sources in Luton each year – paying back an eye-watering £13 million in interest alone - affecting over 12,000 people in the town.

Homelessness

Luton has considerable pressures in terms of homelessness prevalence and temporary accommodation use. In 2022, Shelter research placed Luton at the top of the UK list on prevalence of homelessness, with one in 66 people in the town considered homeless. Our housing solutions service sees an average of 450 households every month seeking advice and support, a number that has doubled over the last 18 months. Numbers of households in temporary accommodation fell in the first part of 2023 but have risen recently. The costs of temporary accommodation creates one of the biggest risks to the overall council budget with a projected overspend of £3.5 million for 2023/24.

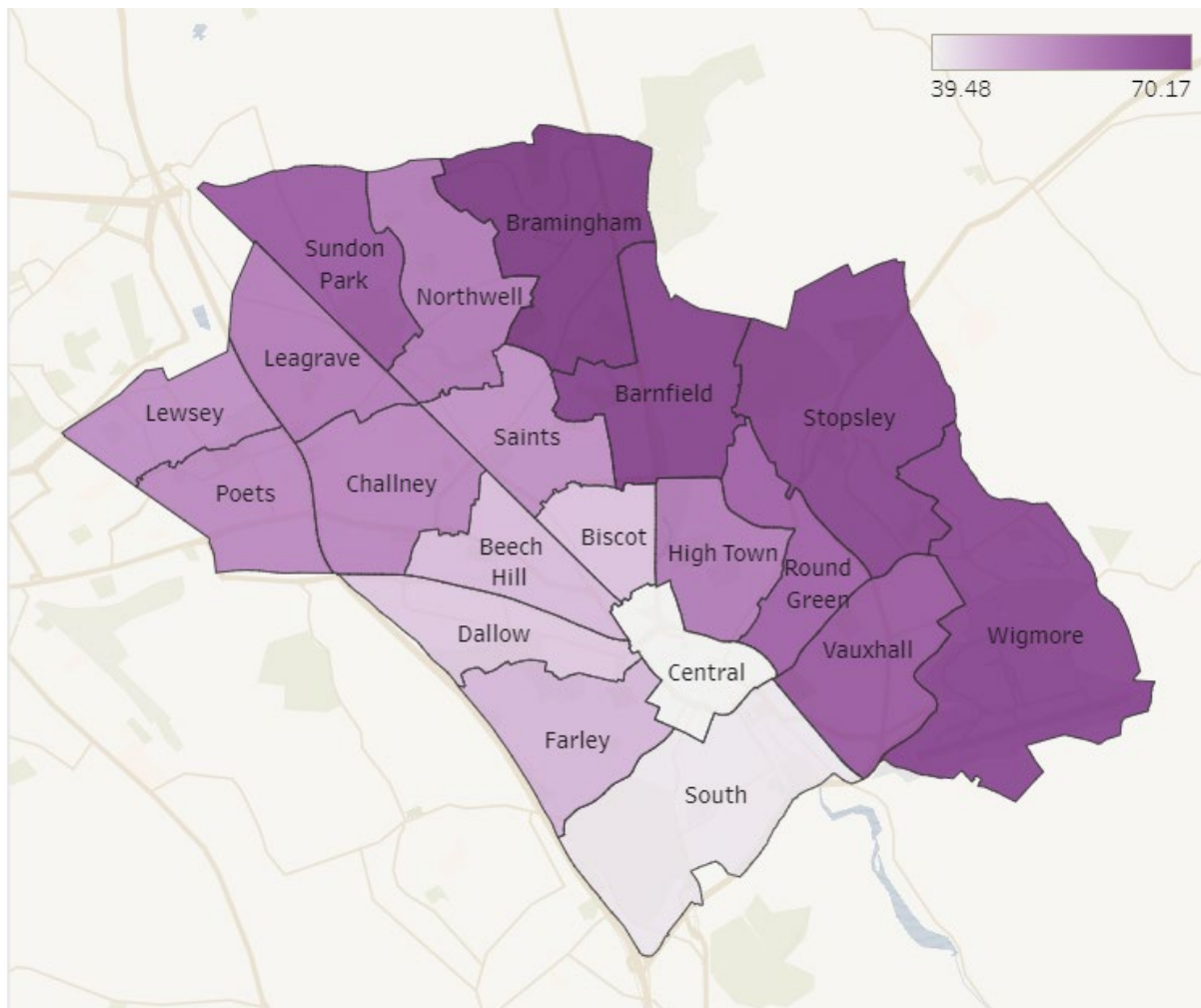
Demand pressures

Demand pressures on local services, often driven by population increase and deprivation are both a symptom and driver of poverty in the town.

Demand pressures are high in many areas, but we have seen the most significant increase in demand in Adult Social Care, with an anticipated overspend of £1.4-1.8m for 2023/24. Similarly, for Children Families and Education, rising referral numbers due to population growth, high levels of poverty and a chaotic children's care market are resulting in children's placement being overspent by £2.6m. Alongside this we have a year on year increase in the number of children with an Education, Health and Care Plan which, increased the need for the council to provide transport to school by over 142 per cent.

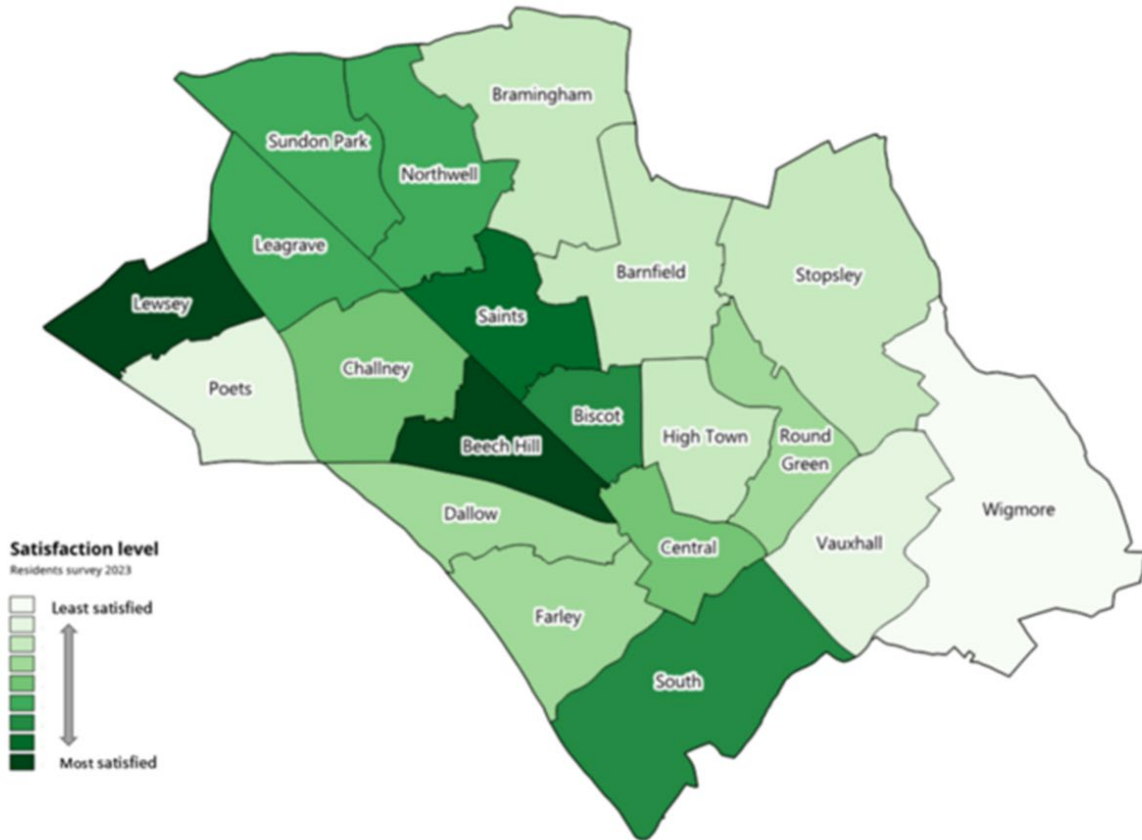
Quality of life

The impact of poverty in Luton is all encompassing; Luton's Social Progress Index seeks to measure quality of life outside of economic factors, focusing on basic human needs, foundations of wellbeing and opportunity within the town. The map below shows disparity of quality in life across Luton, with darker shades showing the more socially progressed wards



While opportunity, aspiration and educational attainment are often limited in deprived areas, we also know that poverty in Luton impacts our entire town.

The map below shows resident satisfaction across Luton. When compared with the SPI map, we note that it is the least 'socially progressed' areas of the town that have higher levels of satisfaction. With such a high number of our population living in destitution, and demand pressures in a variety of areas, the town's resources focus on our most vulnerable, meaning projects and work that would benefit the more 'socially progressed' areas of Luton are not always able to be prioritised - everyone in Luton, whether directly, or indirectly, is impacted by inequitable financial distribution across the UK.



OUR RESPONSE: LUTON 2040

Luton 2040 is our response to the challenge of poverty in our town. Together, as key system leaders and anchor institutions, we have developed this vision with residents and partners across Luton, based on their aspirations for the future of the town and the 225,300 people that live here.

We know that poverty and inequality cuts across outcomes for our residents in education, health and employment and community safety which is why creating a town free of poverty is at the heart of our vision. We also know that poverty is a complex problem with no one simple solution. So while at the heart of tackling poverty is our ambition for Luton to be a town built on fairness, a place that gives equitable opportunities to all, our vision is built around five priorities, each of which contributes to achieving our overall goal:



Supporting a strong and empowered community



Building an inclusive economy



Improving population wellbeing and tackling health inequalities



Becoming a child friendly town



Tackling the climate emergency and becoming a net zero town





AREAS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

Within Luton's evolving system, we know there are areas that need further work and development.

Our resources and systems don't always match our ambition

Luton 2040 is our key vision, an ambitious agenda with the alleviation of poverty at its heart. This would be a wildly ambitious goal for anywhere in the country, but in a town facing the scale of challenges that Luton does and chronic underfunding from central government, the gap between ambition and resources is clear. The development of 2040 itself needs further resourcing as we grow a system to understand, evaluate and clearly mark our journey towards 2040. To reach where we want to be in 2040 will require making the absolute most of what we have, constantly innovating to generate more from less, and town-wide buy-in.

We need to continue to evolve and strengthen the 2040 governance

Luton 2040 is an ambition held by our whole system. In order to mature in this work together we need to develop a set of shared KPI's, increase the number of organisations who have committed to the vision through taking a Luton 2040 Pledge and make our system wide governance structure more effective. Crucially this includes diversifying who is supporting 2040, particularly by increasing private sector buy-in. We want to grow the collective ownership of our vision, so that it is being driven across the town, even when we are not in the room.

We need to further develop our approach to working together with residents

The Wigan Deal is a great example of how a system's culture can transform the relationship between local government and residents. The strong partnership-focused culture we have across system leaders in Luton now needs to translate more fully to our work with residents. We need a unique approach for our unique community, one that will best place 2040 at the heart of what we do and create meaningful town-wide partnerships. There are already some areas of good practice, including the Fairness Taskforce and Black Lives Matter, but principles from this work need to now permeate through all that we do.

We need to continue to develop partnerships

Partnerships are at the core of our Luton 2040 work and a real strength for our town. We're proud of the partnerships within Luton and the shared commitment to the wellbeing of the town, but their remains unlocked potential that will enable us to go to the next level if we are to get where we want to go. We need partnerships that move beyond shared vision, into shared work and resources, partnerships both within Luton Council and beyond that break us out of silo working, into relationships leading to mutual flourishing and tangible outcomes. The appetite for this work is there, but we know these things don't just happen – they need care and attention.

We need to become more data-led

Our use of data in decision-making is currently limited. Tools launched over recent years such as the Minimum Income Standard and Social Progress Index have allowed us greater insight into the shape of poverty in Luton, and specific population data has allowed customer services to support residents in applying for a fuller ranger of benefits, but this work must continue to evolve and allow our solutions to these complex problems to be better data-led.

We need to be less self-effacing; shout louder; and have bigger Regional and National voice

With the challenges in Luton, we are often backwards in coming forwards, slow to let people know about the amazing strengths within Luton in the face of adversity. Our innovative streak, resilience and ability to buck trends and punch above our weight are often drowned out by talk of the things going wrong, meaning our narrative is not always as positive as it should be. In facing the sharp end of many global challenges, we have something to say on the regional and national stage, but in order to do this, and access to funding streams that could come our way through this, we need to build stronger and more intentional relationships with central government and the civil service.

Our enabling services need further development

Due to austerity and a lack of resources, some of our backhouse functions have had limited investment making them, at times, slow and complicated. This means that it is hard for us to be responsive, including swift and clear communications with front line staff, paying local contractors in good time and changing the shape of our teams quickly in order to respond to need.

We need to develop a better working relationship with our new auditor

Despite our best efforts, the relationship with our current Auditor is not as positive as we would like. We have made a positive start to the relationship with the new Auditor (from 23/24 onwards) and this needs to further strengthen to ensure that we get a set of Accounts that are Audited and a Value for Money statement that is under taken.

CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE

This position paper seeks to expand on the strengths and assets of our town and the challenges facing both Luton council, and our system-wide approach to Luton 2040, through the lens of the five high-level themes adopted for all LGA Corporate Peer Challenges:

1.

Local priorities and outcomes:

Are the council's priorities clear and informed by the local context? Is the council delivering effectively on its priorities and achieving improved outcomes for all its communities?

2.

Organisational and place leadership:

Does the council provide effective local leadership? Are there good relationships with partner organisations and local communities?

3.

Governance and culture:

Are there clear and robust governance arrangements? Is there a culture of respect, challenge and scrutiny?

4.

Financial planning and management:

Does the council have a clear understanding of its current financial position? Does the council have a strategy and a clear plan to address its financial challenges?

5.

Capacity for improvement:

Is the organisation able to support delivery of local priorities? Does the council have the capacity to improve?

As a local council, and a town-wide system, we have a strong clarity of vision and direction. We're delighted to host such a strong, varied and experienced peer team to Luton as you join us in reviewing our approach as we seek to ensure our resources and efforts are well-aligned towards 2040.

Welcome to Luton.



PREVIOUS LGA REVIEW

The feedback from Luton's previous LGA included the below as areas which would take our work 'to the next level':

The impact of IT on customers and the council

The very strong message from staff and elected members is that the situation with IT has seen performance stabilise but it has not driven the level of change or improvement that other Councils have seen in the last few years, despite the investment that Luton Council has made. It is seen to represent one of the council's most significant risks and opportunities.

Please see page 85 for an update on Luton Council's insourcing project in relation to IT.

Corporate enablers

Notable progress was being made in the areas of HR and organisational development, Business Intelligence and Communications. The way in which Finance Business Partners supported and advised the Directorates and services to which they are affiliated is seen to model the 'gold standard' for the provision of support within the council from the corporate centre.

Transformation support and programme management were seen as essential for the council's ambitions to be delivered successfully HR and Organisational Development.

Please see page 83 for an update on Luton Council's ongoing transformation programme.

Checks and balances

Luton's level of ambition made it "no ordinary council" and necessitated an equivalent scale of checks and balances in order to ensure those ambitions were fulfilled.

The rigour, expert input and challenge being provided in relation to the £225m investment being made in the DART represented an example of good practice, but the feedback stressed the importance of carefully managed risk going forward.

Please see page 68 for an update on Luton Council's strategic risk management.

Luton as 'positive disrupters'

The feedback highlighted the changing power dynamic between Luton Council and the wider system, pointing out that to reach its full potential the council needed the support of a range of partners, and would benefit from a comprehensive long-term strategy and approach, encompassing all key partners.

Luton's 2040 vision is our key response to this feedback, not only as a town-wide strategy, but as a partnership-focused approach to our life-changing transformation programme and service delivery. As this document shows, this sits at the heart of Luton Council.

ACHIEVEMENTS SINCE PREVIOUS LGA REVIEW

 <p>Delivered our Covid-19 recovery plans for the economy and population wellbeing</p>	 <p>Launched our new Town Centre Masterplan</p>	 <p>Launched a new Employment and Skills Strategy</p>	 <p>Kickstart employment scheme delivered to support young people into work</p>	 <p>Delivering our continuous improvement journey for children's services</p>
 <p>Launch of a new Heritage Strategy – Curating Luton</p>	 <p>The opening of a new pocket park and opening up of the River Lea in the town centre</p>	 <p>Launch of Luton Rising – a new brand for our airport focussed on sustainable growth that supports our community and our planet</p>	 <p>Completion of Barnfield College's £25 million redevelopment</p>	 <p>Premium Progression Partnership scheme launched by University of Bedfordshire</p>
 <p>Delivery of Luton's first heritage month – with a full programme of events</p>	 <p>Refresh of our Arts and Culture Strategy – Harnessing Momentum</p>	 <p>The Culture Trust, Luton opened Hat Works in the Hat District</p>	 <p>Schools kept open throughout the pandemic and education catchup to support pupils</p>	 <p>Successful Creative Leaders Programme piloted</p>
 <p>Delivery of 600 new homes by developers, with a further 1,500 due to be completed by March 2023</p>	 <p>Opening of the new Windmill Hill SEND school</p>	 <p>Established Thriving Communities social prescribing programme</p>	 <p>Creation of our Integrated Family Partnership service</p>	
 <p>Six Luton Parks retained Green Flag status</p>	 <p>Luton's Fairness Taskforce launched</p>	 <p>Access for All upgrades delivered at Luton Airport Parkway Station</p>	 <p>Operation Foresight increasing policing and enforcement to improve town centre safety in 2021 and 2022</p>	



University of Bedfordshire launches its Civic Agreement with Luton Council



Completion of Putteridge High School's new £23 million building



Launch of new Adult Social Care Strategy and Luton's first social work academy



Lewsey Pool and sports facilities refurbished and reopened



Edge of Care service launched



Procurement of Barnardo's to deliver new Junior Safeguarding Board



Established Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Board



73% of residents said they were satisfied with Luton as a place to live in 2022 – the highest level ever recorded



Resettlement programmes for refugees from Afghanistan and Ukraine



Over 375,000 vaccines delivered to residents



£56.6 million in business grants delivered to local businesses and 39,500 jobs supported through furlough



Planning approved for Power Court, a new stadium for Luton Town FC



Good Business Charter officially launched



More than 280 people successfully helped out of temporary accommodation



Obtained £19.1 million of Bus Back Better funding to deliver our Bus Service Improvement Plan



ABCD community clean ups organised as part of #KeepLutonTidy campaign



Mary Seacole Housing Association and Bedfordshire and Luton Community Foundation launch Will Power project



More than £119 million in grant funding secured by 543 organisations in Luton since 2020



Launch of BLMK Integrated Care System and University of Bedfordshire's research hub



£20 million secured from the Levelling Up Fund for town centre regeneration



New Town Centre Strategic Board established



Luton officially becomes a Marmot Town, following release of report by Institute for Health Equity on Reducing Health Inequalities in Luton



London Luton Airport back to 80% of pre-pandemic passenger numbers by summer 2022



Luton school pupils achieve better Key Stage 2 results than the national average in 2022



No school exclusions among looked after children cohort for another year



Secured £7.7 million Salix grant to decarbonise public sector buildings

LUTON
2040

LOCAL PRIORITIES AND OUTCOMES





Luton faces unique challenges for local government and civic leadership. For a detailed look at the data driving much of our work, visit Luton's Data Observatory [here](#).

Our Luton 2040 vision, shaped by leaders and residents, is our starting point in responding to the complex challenges that face our community.

LUTON 2040

Our town-wide vision for Luton 2040 is to be a healthy, fair and sustainable town where everyone can thrive and no-one has to live in poverty.

First launched in October 2020 the vision has been created by residents and partners and responds directly to the evidence gathered by the Inclusive **Growth Commission in 2019**, which recognised the scale of poverty in our town and the clear link between this and many other challenges, including education and health inequalities.

The Luton 2040 vision is built around five priorities, each of which contributes to achieving our vision:

Supporting a strong and empowered community, built on **fairness**, local pride and a powerful voice for all our residents.



Building an inclusive **economy** that delivers investment to support the growth of businesses, jobs and incomes.



Improving population wellbeing and tackling **health** inequalities to enable everyone to have a good quality of life and reach their full potential.



Becoming a **child friendly** town, where our children grow up happy, healthy and secure, with a voice that matters and the opportunities they need to thrive.



Tackling the climate emergency and becoming a **net zero** town with sustainable growth and a healthier environment.



The first phase of the vision was focussed on responding to the immediate challenges we faced during the Covid-19 pandemic. Since then businesses, public sector, residents and voluntary and community organisations have worked together to overcome these challenges and lay the foundations for us to achieve this shared vision.

We have laid the foundations for systems leadership and have strong buy-in from partners all making changes in order to work together. To help fuel and capture this change, we have developed a pledge system that enables local organisations to articulate how they are contributing. So far we have 30 pledges from organisations including University of Bedfordshire, Luton and Dunstable Hospital, Luton 6th Form College, Barnfield College, London Luton Airport Operations Ltd and BLMK Integrated Care Board. For a list of all our pledges please visit www.luton2040.co.uk/partners

Together we have delivered some great work that has included the development of more than 1,275 new homes, the completion of new schools, a new building for Barnfield College and improvements to sports facilities at Lewsey Sports Centre. Our town centre is transforming with more than £20 million secured for regeneration. We have also seen the launch of our new place brand Step Forward Luton, and the establishment of our Fairness Taskforce, a truly innovative approach to empowering residents that is being delivered by partners across the voluntary and community sector.

Over the last three years, we have also set out our strategies, plans and partnership approaches to deliver on each of our priorities over the long-term. This has included the development of our new Fairness Strategy, Town Centre Masterplan, Health Inequalities Action Plan and our Roadmap to Net Zero. As well as developing our local systems to

deliver in partnership on our 2040 priorities, we have been building stronger links with central government, aligning our priorities and plans closely with the national agendas for levelling up and net zero. These links are starting to help generate increased support and funding, which will be critical to attracting further inward investment and major transformation of our town.

We know that what we are delivering is making a positive impact in the lives of the people of Luton, making it a place where more and more people are able to thrive:




Our latest 2040 progress report shows that child poverty in the town dropped from **45 per cent to 39.5 per cent**. Unlike most of the rest of the country, fewer children in Luton are in relative poverty from working households than in 2014.




Almost two-thirds of residents (64 per cent) consider themselves happy, compared to **53 per cent** last year.




Over the last decade, Luton has seen a significant drop in the percentage of the working age population without qualifications, from **18 per cent in 2011, to 9.8 per cent in 2021**.



89.5 per cent of pupils in Luton are attending 'good' or 'outstanding' schools.



Just **3.7 per cent of 16-17 year olds** in Luton are reported as NEET (not in education, employment or training) or unknown, which compares very favourably to both regional (4.2 per cent) and national (5.2 per cent) averages.



The latest reporting period saw carbon emissions per capita in Luton at just **65 per cent** of the national average and dropping by **3 per cent annually** on average.

Despite this great progress we still know there is lots of work to do. Our progress report identifies work we need to do as a system to tackle challenges head on. This includes:



Explore what we can do in the short term to reduce the number of people living in destitution



Train all staff on how their roles can tackle health inequalities



Recruit locally



Find new ways to hear and incorporate the voice of residents, young people and children in decision making



Shift of focus towards progress and attainment in schools



Ensure all front line workers know what support is available for individuals and know how to recommend/signpost.

Our work to tackle the immediate devastation that poverty is causing of some of our residents alongside our work for system and structural change that will eradicate poverty in the long term is the two pronged approach required if we are to achieve our vision.

GROWING AN INCLUSIVE ECONOMY

We officially launched the Town Centre Master plan in 2021 and secured £20m from the Levelling Up Fund towards the £140m Stage project. We opened Hat Gardens in late 2022, Luton Town Football Club has been promoted to the Premier League and confirmed £600m investment in a new town centre stadium and our Barnfield College officially opened their brand-new £25m campus and work is now underway for the second phase.

Council-owned Luton Airport, one of the region's most significant economic assets, supports a critical supply of jobs and economic activity in the town, the counties of Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire, and beyond. In 2019, the airport supported over 28,400 jobs (generating £1.8 billion in GDP) across the UK, when its supply chain is included. Luton Rising recently submitted their Development Consent Order application to seek approval to grow to 32m passengers. If successful this will significantly increase the number of jobs and investment our town can benefit from by creating 11,000 additional jobs, £1.5bn economic activity and £13m per year invested into Luton's community.

Key development sites in the town continue to progress at pace, with phase 3 of Butterfield business site underway alongside development at Junction 10 delivering 2,300 jobs.

Luton had the highest net new job creation in British cities and large towns between 2010 and 2022, even ahead of London. Luton also had the second-highest business start-up rate in the country in 2023, along with the 5th highest proportion of private-sector jobs. We launched our employment and skills strategy in March 2022 to ensure that more of these jobs are secured by Luton residents.

The development of our new Inclusive Economy strategy will build on these successes, ensuring that growth is fairly distributed across the town, creating equitable opportunities for all.

We want to use this strategy to highlight the role that businesses play in providing good jobs and supporting communities and that the public sector plays in being more enterprising and efficient in delivering better services.

Luton is a great place to do business with year-on-year business growth, now sitting at over 8,000. Luton's GVA annual contribution to the UK economy is £5.4bn with over 106,000 jobs driving the town's economy.

Geographically we sit within the economic and academic heartland between London, Oxford, and Cambridge. Our connectivity by road, rail and air is exceptional, with easy onward reach to the UK's principal seaports. And it is home to one of the UK's fastest broadband networks. Business succeeds thanks to its connections and Luton has them all.

Luton supports established and growing specialist sectors, including aviation, technology, advanced manufacturing and engineering, creative and digital, as well as logistics and professional services. International organisations such as Stellantis (Vauxhall), easyJet, TUI Travel, Wizz Air, Moovshack, Anritsu, Eaton MTL and Churchill Group all have a home here.

As one of the most entrepreneurial places in the country, its unique location, broad-based economy, diverse population and reputation for collaboration has enabled Luton to reimagine itself and diversify. A growing economy will lead to more investment for the town. However, we know we need to remain competitive, embrace innovation and new and emerging technologies including Generative Artificial Intelligence if we are to continue to grow.



CIVIC PRIDE

Improving the look and feel of our town and increasing pride in place among our residents is absolutely vital to achieving our 2040 vision. We know that this is a real challenge following years of negative headlines and coverage about our town from national media. Although we know this is unjustified given all that our town has to offer, this stubborn narrative has often impacted our own resident's perceptions of the town. In addition, we know that negative perceptions impact our ability to attract people and businesses.

In order to help overcome this challenge, at the end of 2022, the council set about developing a new place brand, in partnership with our community to help increase civic pride and market Luton as a great place to live, work, study, visit and invest.

In August 2023 we officially launched Step Forward Luton, our new place and inward investment brand, fronted by our community and business leaders with a dedicated council team supporting its implementation and marketing strategy.

The place brand is led by around 40 ambassadors who represent all parts of our community, including our key business sectors, and community leaders across education, sport, healthcare, the voluntary and community sector and arts, culture and heritage.

Step Forward Luton has also already helped to bring significant positive attention from local, national and international media including:

- being awarded a Luton edition of the Monopoly board game
- being selected by the FA as the location to launch its first bursary scheme to increase global-majority underrepresentation in refereeing
- hosting Radio 1 Big Weekend in May 2024, bringing over 100,000 people and global media attention to Luton



ARTS, CULTURE, HERITAGE AND SPORTS

Luton grew up around the development of the hat industry in the Victorian Era. The presence of the River Lea allowed us to evolve our straw plaiting and hat-making techniques and as a result the Luton boater became world renowned. This industry brought wealth and prosperity to the town and by the turn of the century it became a place where large business's wanted to invest. In 1905 Vauxhall moved to Luton and became a key driver in the town's growth. People from all over the globe, especially from the Caribbean, Ireland and Asia, moved to Luton to work on the Vauxhall plants, this migration celebrated today through the flamingo's that decorate our public spaces.

Despite the vast variety of cultures our community represents, it's this industrial heritage that binds us together – it's our shared story and one we are proud of. Our heritage buildings – old hat factories that have stood the test of time; the Mossman collection of carriages and cars at Stockwood Park Museum (the largest in the country); and our now thriving airport, remind us of our roots in industry and transport and set the stage for us to share, learn from and enjoy each other's diverse cultures. This is demonstrated in the fantastic festivals and parties our communities throw each year, including St Patricks Day celebrations (the 2nd biggest celebration in the UK outside of Ireland), Desi Fest (Asian music festival attended by 40,000 people), and Luton Carnival, celebrating carnival traditions from around the world and rooted in the tradition of our first Hat Parade in 1926.

Our strategy for arts, culture and creative industries **Harnessing Momentum** outlines three key outcomes for culture in Luton:

- building a prosperous creative economy
- fostering diverse cultural activity for community well-being
- and providing a robust creative education

These outcomes are influenced by our Heritage Strategy, **Curating Luton** with an ambition for Luton's sense of place to be anchored through its heritage; wellbeing, civic pride and our identity as a proud industrious working-class town to be celebrated and sustained.

In order to deliver on these plans we are working with key stakeholder groups made up of cultural and heritage leaders from across the town. We have also formed strong relationships with Arms Length Body Groups including Historic England, Arts Council England (ACE), National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) and DLUHC, becoming a Levelling Up Priority Area 1, NLHF Area of Focus and ACE Priority Area. As a result we have made significant progress in the last five years including an increase in the number of ACE funded National Portfolio Organisations (NPO) from one to four and the establishment of our first Cultural People and Places (CPP) Lead Organisation. Since 2018, these groups, alongside the council and university, have secured more than £30m of investment for creativity and an additional £3.4m for heritage.

Established in 2008, The Culture Trust Luton is a key local stakeholder with Arts and Culture, operating two council-owned museums, the Hat Factory arts centre and two of their own buildings, focused on creative industries and based within the historic Hat District of Luton. Recognising the challenges that this sector is operating in, the council has recently commissioned a Value for Money and Contingency Planning Review, with final results due back in early 2024.



In addition to the work of the Culture Trust and other key cultural organisations, we deliver a diverse events programme, and last year alone delivered or supported 33 cultural events and 25 activation events. Some highlights from this programme over the last few years have included:

People Power Passion, a series of events showcasing the towns culture and heritage

Visit of King Charles III to Luton, where he met with over 25 community leaders and visited our Town Hall, Central Gurdwara and the DART.

Celebration event for Luton Town Football Club entering the Premier League, joined by 20,000 people in St George's Square and broadcast all over the world.

We are currently in the process of refreshing our sport and physical activities strategies, which will adopt a whole systems approach to physical activity. Active Luton, a community wellbeing trust, operates the leisure and library facilities on behalf of the Council with a focus on making a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of Luton's community. Alongside Active Luton, the Town has a large number of private gyms and community sports groups, including Luton Town Football Club community trust, providing numerous free and affordable physical activity opportunities for local people.

The Council is strategically linked with Sport England, the Active Partnership (Be Active) and local representatives of national governing bodies, such as Beds FA and Cricket East.



TOWN CENTRE

Creating a thriving town centre is at the heart of our strategy for building a more inclusive economy so that everyone can thrive as part of our mission for Luton 2040. The £1.7 billion transformation programme detailed within our Town Centre Masterplan includes:

The Stage

In 2021 we secured £20 million from the Levelling Up Fund for a mixed-use development containing a performance space, new homes, office and creative spaces and improved public realm.

Power Court

Outline planning consent already approved for a new 19,500 seater stadium for Luton Town Football Club in the heart of the town centre as part of a 20 acre regeneration to include other retail and residential spaces.

Unculverting the River Lea and Hat Gardens

The Town Centre Masterplan includes various phased plans for unculverting sections of the River Lea throughout the town centre. In May 2023, the first phase of this project was completed with the construction of an adjacent pocket park Hat Gardens.

Hat District

Luton's Hat District is continuing to see the repurposing of a number of former hat factories, led by the Culture Trust, which has helped to reimagine this part of the town centre as the home of a number of thriving creative businesses and the location for new cultural events, such as Luton Pride.

As well as the physical transformation of our town centre we are working with partners to reactivate our town centre to meet the needs of all residents, increase footfall and local spend. In 2023 we formed a new Town Centre Strategic Board, bringing together key town centre anchors and stakeholders such as The Mall, University of Bedfordshire, Luton Town Football Club, representatives of business, the cultural sector, Central Government, Beds Police and transport providers.

The council has put in place a dedicated place activation team which works closely with other town centre partners to activate new and existing spaces in the town centre. These activations resulted in weekly footfall increases of between 15 per cent and 53 per cent in the immediate area compared to 2022 and has contributed to more than three quarters of surveyed residents having a better perception of the area.

Operation Metal was launched in August 2023 to target a varying range of issues within Luton Town Centre. This has included Luton Council working with the community policing teams on targeted days of action, ongoing operations and initiatives within the Town Centre with a sustained focus on enforcement, support and problem solving against crimes and the drivers and causes. Recent statistics presented to the Community Safety Partnership support a downward trend in town centre anti-social behaviour as well as retail theft.

IMPROVING NEIGHBOURHOODS

The vision for Luton's neighbourhoods is to create **Valued Improved Places** - creating positive changes that enhance the lives of residents and contribute to a fairer and more connected community, supporting residents in achieving their goals and attracting businesses to thrive in a supportive commercial environment. The plan focuses on four key goals for future neighbourhoods: cleanliness, green and healthy spaces, safety and mobility, and regulated and resilient communities.

1. Cleaner, Tidier Neighbourhoods will give us more attractive neighbourhoods and foster a sense of pride among residents, with over 90 per cent clean streets in our next annual survey. Good progress has already been made through the launch of our war on waste. Since August 2023 we have issued 2,429 fixed penalty notices and since declaring the war on waste in Oct 23 we have had 21 successful prosecutions for waste related offences (fly-tipping) with a further 35 cases waiting for a court date. We have also increased the max fines for environmental crime e.g. fly-tipping from £400 to £1,000 and littering to £500.

2. Green and Healthy Neighbourhoods will create neighbourhoods with abundant greenery, air-cleansing trees, biodiversity, and natural habitats. Parks will be transformed into destinations with excellent facilities, events, and volunteering opportunities. We also want to increase the square footage of naturalised areas enabling us to promote physical and mental well-being and benefit from biodiversity gain.

3. Safe and Mobile Neighbourhoods will reduce crime and anti-social behaviour, creating safer environments for residents. The plan envisions less cluttered streets with an emphasis on sustainable travel options such as walking and cycling. This not only enhances safety but also promotes a healthier and more environmentally friendly way of living.

4. Regulated and Resilient Neighbourhoods will create fair and balanced public spaces where competing uses are equitably managed. This involves protecting individuals and businesses from unfair practices, upholding rights and safety, and advancing public safety, health, and environmental protection goals.

The service also aims to create a strong commercial portfolio in contributing to public value gains and to reconnect with the community, involving residents in decision-making processes, and ensuring that services are accessible to the diverse customer base in Luton.



HOUSING

Luton has considerable pressures in terms of homelessness prevalence and temporary accommodation use. In 2022, Shelter research placed Luton at the top of the UK list on prevalence of homelessness, with one in 66 people in the town considered homeless.

Although Luton has tended to have lower house prices than surrounding areas, the affordability of homes and rents in the town is a significant problem. We have a large private rented sector (29 per cent) which is both a route into settled accommodation but also a driver of homelessness due to tenancies ending. The Local Housing Allowance falls far short of actual rents in the town. However, Luton is an attractive location for other boroughs in more expensive areas to relocate people in housing need. Additionally the direct actions of the Home Office, who at one point in 2023 had placed over a quarter of the East of England's Asylum seekers in Luton, have hugely exacerbated the Housing Issues. This has made it harder for Luton Council to secure affordable temporary accommodation or move on accommodation with private landlords locally.

Attempts to introduce Additional and Selective Licensing have been hampered by legal challenges but are anticipated to roll out in May 2024.

The costs of temporary accommodation creates one of the biggest risks to the overall council budget with a projected overspend of £3.5 million for 2023/24. This is down to high demand, with our housing solutions service seeing an average of 450 households every month, a number that has doubled over the last 18 months. Despite this work, numbers of households in temporary accommodation fell in the first part of 2023 but have risen recently.

Additional pressures to housing demand are expected in 2024 as the Home Office issues decisions on approximately 1400 asylum seekers placed in accommodation in Luton. We also expect other areas to encourage people whose asylum claims are successful to relocate to the town. We have a very effective and co-ordinated multi-agency approach to rough sleeping which brought numbers down to low single figures in 2023, but this is expected to rise significantly in response to broader economic and local factors, including vulnerable refugees being evicted from Home Office accommodation.

Luton is a tightly-boundaried borough with limited developable land. High remediation costs and low end values impact on development viability, meaning that the council is not reaching its planning policy target of 20 per cent affordable housing on sites with over 11 homes.

The council has an active development programme within its Housing Revenue Account, and a housing company, Foxhall Homes. The Council continues to use a range of methods to increase affordable housing including buying back former right to buy family sized homes, small site developments and mixed use developments. However, new affordable housing provision generated within the council is not replacing homes lost to Right To Buy, which were 94 in 2022/23. Active engagement with developers and housing associations does not translate into significant additional affordable housing, with only one housing association currently developing in the town. Overall, lettings of all affordable housing (council and housing association) are around 500 per year.

The council's housing stock has benefitted from sustained significant investment and has an average EPC rating of C. However, future challenges around building safety, regulation and decarbonisation are not underestimated and will require additional investment.

ASYLUM SEEKERS

The asylum and refugee landscape across Luton is both complex and challenging, with a collective recognition of various pressures, impacts and risks for system partners, local people and the asylum seekers themselves.

When considered against the regional and national picture, Luton has a disproportionate volume of refugee asylum seekers based within the town whereby:

a.

Luton has 6.53 per cent of the total refugee asylum seeker population of the East of England compared with 3.4 per cent of the overall population, a proportion that is twice that of Bedford and Central Bedfordshire boroughs.

b.

When considering Supported Asylum (i.e. removing Afghan and Ukraine schemes) and the accommodation categories with considerably greater impact and risk (i.e. Initial Accommodation, Dispersal Accommodation, Contingency Accommodation), Luton now hosts nearly one sixth of the total East of England asylum population (15.36 per cent).

c.

For contingency accommodation specifically (e.g. hotels), Luton is the 12th highest LA in the country in terms of population volume and per capita.

The volume of asylum seekers has remained stable for several months at an estimated 1400 people, however, the risk and issue picture remains one of an evolving nature, including notably:

- Significant health and safety issues at accommodation sites
- Additional pressure on services including primary care, education, social care and housing
- Wider community tension and cohesion issues with actual and threatened exploitation by extreme right-wing groups
- Increased safeguarding incidents and risks at accommodation sites
- Impacts on perceptions around community safety
- Concerns in terms of risks of criminal exploitation and related incidents including serious violence
- Burdens and risk of increased numbers of Separated Migrant Children requiring assessment and support

In terms of housing, since September 23 and the local implementation of the Home Office Streamlined asylum Process, the council has placed 12 households in temporary accommodation.

Whilst impact of asylum referrals on the supported accommodation pathway from our key partners in Q3 suggests a significant impact.

As a key port of entry, the local footprint includes an Airport Hub for Ukrainian refugee support, funded by DLUCH, but coordinated through the council's civil contingency and resilience team. Up until August 22, the local footprint also contained a hotel for 450 Afghan refugees.

Efforts to engage the Home Office around the disproportionate position and impacts have been challenging, despite previous senior level assurances provided and escalation including letters from Luton CEx, CC Beds Police, ICB CEO and Local independent Safeguarding lead to HO directors, as well as communications from MP's to respective Ministers and from Council Leader to the Prime Minister. We are therefore progressing a formal mediation process with the Home Office.

Moving forward, the Home Office new streamlined process and speed of applications is viewed as being a critical risk to services such as housing, education, social care and primary care.

Whilst challenges remain, there is a strong recognition of and support for the caring and compassionate actions taken by our communities, voluntary sector partners and public sector organisations who continue to pull out all the stops to support those seeking sanctuary in this country after fleeing conflict, disaster, discrimination and dangerous war zones across the world.

This is perhaps illustrated best by the formation of the Luton City of Sanctuary group, which the council is actively supporting.



Local position as of 26th Jan 24

Provider	Period	Total number of referrals	Asylum Referrals	Asylum accommodated
Mary Seacole	Q3	307	71	12
IMPAKT	Q3	329	91	7
Keystage Housing	Q3	163	40	31
Signposts	Q3	319	62	16
Squared	Q3	N/A	75	23
Total		1118	339	89

Site/scheme	Type of Accommodation	Home Office Classification	Capacity	Numbers
Lea Halls	Self-catering, (ex- student residence)	Initial accommodation (IA)	460	419
Ibis	Hotel (Airport)	Initial Accommodation (IA)	204	129 (fluctuates weekly)
Skyline	Hotel (Bury Park)	Contingency	135	88
Icon	Hotel (Town Centre)	Contingency	150	123
Chiltern Hotel	Hotel (Edge of town)	Contingency	126	108
Dispersed Accommodation	Various residential (across town)	DA	N/A	83
Cardiff House	Self-catering units (Town Centre)	DA (Overflow Dispersed Accommodation)	180	178
Separated Migrant Children	Various residential (across town)	SMC	N/A	49 (In care) 111 (Care Leavers)
Homes for Ukraine	Various residential (across town)	HfU	N/A	95
TOTAL				1383

Table 1.1 Local asylum landscape, as of 19.01.24

DEMAND PRESSURES

Adult Social Care

The Adult Social Care (ASC) budget in Luton has experienced a significant financial shift from a Q2 projected underspend of £429k to an anticipated overspend of £1.4-1.8m at Q3 (under validation at present). This change is attributed to substantial growth in purchased care, offset by additional grants and staffing underspend.

The demographic context in Luton reveals a population increase of 22,200 since 2011, with a faster growth rate (10.9 per cent) than the national average (6.6 per cent) from 2011 to 2021. Our initial predictions using census data underestimated the rise in adult social care, with factors such as COVID impact and the transition from children's services contributing to unexpected demand.

Over recent years budget growth for ASC has not matched the surge in demand. Despite previous growth awards for purchased care in 2020-21 and 2021-22, no growth was allocated in 2022-23 and 2023-24, despite a request. A bid for demographic growth in 2024-25, resulting in a provisionally agreed growth of £1m. Further monies recently being awarded from central government to be added, circa a further £850k. Whilst this will help, the current predicted overspend is at £3m.

To address budget pressures, we have intensified monthly monitoring and analysis, revealing an increase in demand and the complexity of care packages. Significant waiting lists for initial assessments contributed to delayed growth realisation, which has now come to fruition. Efforts to reduce waiting lists have increased the percentage of assessments within 28 days from 30 per cent in April 2023 to 53 per cent in November 2023.

The next steps to greater understanding of the budget, focus on detailed analysis of unexpected growth in the younger physically disabled cohort. These may be due to factors such as untreated or under identified risk of significant health conditions due to delays in the health system, and/or over-prescribing of care following hospital discharge.

ASCs new Target Operating Model (TOM) (under development) aims to reduce demand through increased early intervention and self-care, supporting 70 per cent of people approaching the council for Adult Social Care to have that care prevented or delayed. The TOM will also address bottlenecks in access and reviews of care, driving improved outcomes, stepping down care when appropriate, and gaining a greater understanding of demand for care.

Efforts to enhance efficiency include business cases and cost modelling for initiatives such as increasing Continuing Health Care contributions, systematic reviews of larger care packages, and stepping down individuals to more independent living, reducing the need for more institutional care.

We also intend to expand our offer to unpaid carers, offering a more flexible approach to meeting their needs. This includes our partner agencies being able to take on Carers Assessments, increasing carers' assessments and annual reviews. Shared Lives provision, is an important aspect of offering respite to families and carers. Our goal is a 75 per cent increase in Shared Lives Carers, increased respite access, and a reduction in residential short-stay placements by the end of 2024-25. The Council is also running a targeted outreach campaign to improve take-up of Carers Allowance following the success of a similar campaign regarding Pension Credit.

The Health and Care Act 2022 gave the Care Quality Commission (CQC) an expanded remit to oversee the quality and performance of both Local Authorities and Integrated Care Systems (ICS) in the delivery of their social care duties.

In preparation for the CQC inspection we have undertaken a range of activities, which includes critically reviewing services, gathering evidence and consulting with internal and external stakeholders who need to engage in the process. This is delivered through the CQC Self-Assessment Project, established within the service's Strengthening Adult Social Care Programme, to take forward all CQC activity and ensure readiness for inspection from January 2024 onwards.

Adult services are progressing their improvement plans at both strategic and operational levels. The improvements are cross-cutting from operational changes, to strategic change in commissioning and wider partnership working. The Strengthening Adult Social Care (ASC) Programme and its six projects, is the vehicle through which long term sustainable change will be realised, integrated with the wider corporate transformation programme and the Service Delivery Plan. The six key work-streams of the Strengthening ASC Programme are: ASC Pathways, Co-Production, Customer Experience and Care, CQC Self-Assessment, Data and Digital, Performance, Quality and Complaints, and Commissioning and Partnerships. The outcomes of this will ensure better performance, productivity, financial sustainability and improved impact and outcomes for our residents and their families as well as improving the prospects for a 'good' CQC rating.

Our plans for improvement within ASC will strongly contribute to our 2040 vision via the Strengthening ASC Programme and associated corporate Transformation work streams to deliver a stronger care sector, ensuring access to good quality services and strong meaningful voice for residents and providing a preventative approach to wellbeing.

In order to help us deliver on these outcomes and make us more sustainable, we are improving our strategic commissioning through the development of two frameworks:

- a commissioning framework, a blueprint for the council's ways of working, instilling clear governance processes and sign-offs, ensuring a seamless and efficient system
- a quality and contract management framework outlining expectations for staff and providers to ensure a fair and resilient system

Ensuring our residents' voice is at the heart of what we do, we plan to improve Co-Production across Adult Social Care, aiming to achieve 'Making It Real' status by March 25. Co-production training for all staff groups, the development of a Co-Production Framework, and a Customer Service Charter by July 24 set the stage for delivering ASC according to our residents' wishes and needs, and better recognising the equality and diversity of our residents so we can ensure more equitable provision.

Children, Families and Education

Children's services have seen growing demand for both children's placements and support for pupils with special educational needs (SEND).

Contextually, Luton has a younger than average population with 26.2 per cent (59,028) aged 17 and under compared with 20.6 per cent nationally. We have seen an increase of 12.2 per cent in children aged under 15 years again significantly higher than the national increase of 4.8 per cent.

Rising referral numbers due to population growth, high levels of poverty and a chaotic children's care market, plus some very expensive care packages for children with high complex needs are resulting in children placement being overspent by £1.557m and further £1.1m in Children with Disability areas - a total overspend of £2.6m. A deficit recovery plan was prepared to deal with placement over spends which included a weekly review of the 72 children on plans costing over £1,000 per week, financial contributions from partners, a review of purchasing for wrap around care, the opening of Wigmore Hall, and the rejoining of the Eastern Region with a launch of a Regional Fostering Recruitment and Retention Hub

Alongside this we have a year on year increase in the number of children with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) which, in three years has increased the need for the council to provide transport from home to school by over 142 per cent from 332 in 2020/21 to 803 in 2023/2024.

To manage this challenge we have established a task and finish group to understand this demand, share best working practice and develop a toolkit to help manage growth/costs of SEND transport for use by local authorities,

In January 2023, Edge Public Solutions were commissioned to review/remodel the service to drive efficiencies and develop alternative travel solutions. During their six months working with the Council, Edge developed a personal transport budget option and rationalised some routes, reporting cost avoidance of £136k.

Through the transformation programme the service is developing four new permanent posts to help us tackle these high costs further. We aim to make savings by:

I.

robustly assessing new applications and having a rolling programme of reviewing transport eligibility (including the type of assistance provided)

II.

increasing management capacity and oversight of internal and external transport, driving efficiencies identified in conjunction with Human Engine; and

III.

promoting the take-up of personal travel budgets and independent travel training as an alternative to minibus transport (this approach would be taken with parental agreement)

The increasing demand for statutory assessment of children with SEND and requiring an EHCP is also creating additional pressure on our Education Psychology team. This, alongside lack of competitive salary structures in Luton, is leading to recruitment and retention challenges and further financial pressure through the need to use external Locums to complete statutory assessments in this area. We have agreed to increase the market supplement for ED Psychs to address this in the short term.



**LUTON
2040**

ORGANISATIONAL AND PLACE LEADERSHIP



The complex challenges that Luton faces in areas such as employment, healthcare and housing can only be tackled by a system-wide approach. This disposition to place leadership is beginning to transform the town’s response to the needs of our communities.

A ROAD MAP TO LUTON 2040

We have a clear vision of what Luton looks like in 2040. We have strong buy-in towards that vision across our community and strong collaborations and partnerships growing up around this, including our civic agreement, work with the Arts and Culture Strategy Group, ICB and Fairness Taskforce.

In response to feedback (including that from the staff survey), we know that the next step in this work is the further development of plans for how we collectively deliver this vision. This work is underway, with the development of our outcomes wheel (below), which describes the target outcomes that we want to have reached by 2040. This is underpinned by resident voice (in green), clearly showing how our ambitions speak directly to the wants and needs of the community.

We have categorised our target outcomes into the areas of need that they address (yellow) which demonstrates how each key priority needs to speak to the others if we are going to reach our ultimate goal of no-one living in poverty in our town. In other words, no silo working here please.



Luton 2040 - where everyone can thrive

A good place to live

Valued improved places

Cleaner and tidier neighbourhoods

Cleaner and tidier neighbourhoods

Safer & more mobile neighbourhoods

Deliver Luton's War on Waste programme

Integrate new Target Operating Model for refuse and cleansing

Create a new Service Policy/Standards with communities

Complete the pilot Enforcement Partnership with WISE, gain democratic approval to extend for a further 2 years with additional powers

Deliver Sports & Play Parks Improvement Programme in line with capital funding- including improved disability friendly offer

Design and deliver phase 1 of the Naturalisation programme (i.e. Green Corridors)

Incorporate proactive public health pest control programmes at target locations

Initiate right grass length, right place working model to support Luton 2040 goals & retention of 6 green flag parks

Further align key elements of work to support vulnerable people (e.g. exploitation and hate crime)

Deliver community safety initiatives in key neighbourhoods, in line with the Community Safety Partnership theme 'ASB & Enviro Crime

Increased targeting of vehicle related issues including idling, parking congestions, schools & unlawful trading relating to vehicles

Continued focus on Town Centre issues to improve its look and feel including renewing the Public Spaces Protection Order

We have been able to use this planning system to track where we are contributing strongly to our vision and where we need to do more. The analysis shows that within the council our resources are aligned to deliver towards every outcome, with very strong alignment towards our target outcomes for a preventative approach to wellbeing, access to good quality services and a strong meaningful voice for residents. More needs to be done to align work towards our Net Zero priorities.

As we gather these maps from our partner organisations, we will grow a whole system view of where we are collectively delivering a strong contribution, and where there are gaps we need to work on.

This will enable us to develop our system wide Road Map to 2040, demonstrating a broad picture of what we will deliver and what will change every four years until we reach our goal.

This is supported by our enabling strategies, ensuring we have the people, systems, resources and tools we need to deliver our work.

Appendix A gives an overview of our strategies and supporting plans, right down to our yearly service plans, that describe how we are going to deliver on our ambitions. This framework has recently been simplified to make it clear how every plan must feed into at least one of the 2040 priorities, helping colleagues from across the council to prioritise our efforts in the same direction.

There is a lot of work to do, so to help us focus and prioritise, we have identified 25 key projects that we have committed to delivering by 2025 and another 25 by 2028. These will help form the basis of our Road Map. The table below outlines progress towards these 50 deliverables.



Priority	Deliverable	Progress	Delivered by 2025 or 2028
Building a more inclusive economy	Our new town centre masterplan will have delivered two new developments.	Town Centre Master plan completed Hat Gardens completed	2025
	Key town centre developments including Power Court Stadium, The Stage and Hat Gardens will all be completed	The Stage development progressing with works on site due to begin from June 2024. Luton 2020 due to submit their detailed planning application later this year, with a completion date of Summer 2026.	2028
	Luton will be recognised as a real living wage town.	This forms part of the Good Business Charter work. We have multiple organisations now signed up, including Luton Council. We are still on target to be the first Good Business Charter Town in the UK. Any employer who achieves GBC status, has to pay the RLW.	2028
	A new heritage strategy, driving wider participation in heritage in Luton.	Delivered – Co-curating Luton Project delivered and development of Heritage Implementation Plan ready to launch.	2025
	Luton will have a new place brand - making our town an attractive place to live, work, study and invest.	Delivered	2025
	Luton will have a new skills strategy delivering skills to match the future jobs of our economy.	Now completed year 2 of the E&S Strategy. You can read the review of year 1 here .	2025
	A new skills and employment hub and a new apprenticeship brokerage scheme will be in place.	Morton House is on track to be open in 2025. Apprenticeship brokerage scheme was launched last year.	2025
	Anchor institutions will be spending more of their money in Luton through a town-wide procurement approach.	Work is underway to shape a new anchors framework for Luton. This will be delivered in partnership with our key anchors across Luton. Prosperity through procurement will be updated this year.	2025

Priority	Deliverable	Progress	Delivered by 2025 or 2028
Improving population wellbeing	Luton's Health Inequalities Delivery Board work programme will be delivering better and more equal healthy physical and mental health outcomes for residents.	Development of key performance measures for the PWS and Health Equity Town underway including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> continuation with life-course approach through launch of family hub offer completion of the drug and alcohol needs assessment across Bedfordshire. Luton is a priority partnership area draft local vaccination strategy developed for Luton 	2025
	Luton will be recognised as the first Marmot Town, delivering on our action plan to tackle the causes of inequality.	Delivered	2028
	Family Hubs will be in operation providing vital early years support and interventions.	Underway	2025
	Delivery of 4,000 new homes, including 500 affordable homes for residents.	As of 31st March 2022- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1275 new homes delivered 506 homes under construction 644 homes have been approved but were not started 574 homes had been applied for The remaining sites had a assessed capacity of 204. 	2025
	Over 425 new homes built each year - 20% of which will be affordable home.	Underway	2028
	Halving the number of households living in temporary accommodation.	Refugee numbers and mobility have been a challenge to delivering this.	2025
	Ending rough sleeping and halving the number of people in temporary accommodation.	Numbers of rough sleepers did begin to decrease but may be rising again.	2028
	Delivery of a new Community Safety Partnership Plan.	Community Safety Partnership (CSP), convened and worked with local people addressing there concerns. Main focus was community issues.	2025
We will tackle persistent issues of crime and antisocial behaviour leading to a significant improvement in residents' perceptions of safety in the town.	Delivery is underway in a number of key areas and community session to collaborate on 'Just Drop It' campaign as well as working with police and NHS.	2028	

Priority	Deliverable	Progress	Delivered by 2025 or 2028
Supporting a strong and empowered community	Luton will have its own equivalent of the “equity round table” and a citizen’s panel, delivering equitable outcomes and a meaningful voice for residents.	Delivered	2025
	The Fairness Taskforce delivering citizen led solutions to increase equity and social inclusion in Luton.	Delivered	2028
	Community hubs will be in operation and supporting residents across the town.	Three pilots have been launched as part of the councils transformation programme, including in Bury Park, Central Library/Town Centre and in Farley Ward.	2025
	Place-based community networks and hubs, increasing access to services and support where they are most needed.	Pilots tested by 2025, with further areas rolled out (currently TBC).	2028
	Luton will be recognised as a disability friendly town.	Early indications and strong community involvement. However there is no standard for this deliverable and the narrative around friendly. Luton disability network in place.	2025
	Town-wide programmes for our community such as Food First, City of Sanctuary, and Warm Spaces.	Community networks have launched and initiated a primary hub at luton library. Core elements and principles have been developed.	2028
	Our perceptions survey will show the highest resident satisfaction on record.	In 2022 satisfaction increased to 73%, but then it decreased to 59% in 2023.	2025
	New approaches to civic involvement such as citizens’ assemblies that increase resident satisfaction and influence over their neighbourhoods and towns.	Ontrack with citizen’s assemblies due to launch soon.	2028
	Creating and delivering a new Fairness and Social Justice Strategy in partnership with our community.	Delivered	2028

Priority	Deliverable	Progress	Delivered by 2025 or 2028
Tackling the climate emergency and becoming a net zero town	A comprehensive climate change action plan being delivered across the town.	Underway	2025
	A clear reduction in the carbon emissions of the town as a whole.	Underway	2028
	More council-owned and privately rented homes will meet Energy Performance Certificate level C and above.	All council owned homes are certificate level C and above.	2025
	All new council homes to be built to Energy Performance rating B or above.	Underway	2028
	The Luton DART will be operational, providing a greener route to the airport for passengers.	Delivered	2025
	Introduction of a new park and ride service.	Butterfield Park and Ride under development - planning application submitted. Capacity of 350 car parking spaces, 17 EV charging points, electric transit buses.	2028
	A workplace parking levy will be in place, funding a more sustainable transport network.	Included in LTP4 as part of demand management. Feasibility study completed. Investment in sustainable transport measures come higher up in the transport hierarchy and are the preferred approach.	2025
	The launch of a new Community Carbon Offset Fund.	Under development. Two routes tested atm – HACT retrofit credits and Anthesis Area Bases Insetting model.	2028
	Additional 1 hectare of trees planted and increased rewilding of the town.	There is an increase of 33ha compared with the 2017 baseline. It exceeds the target in the Luton Tree Strategy.	2028

Priority	Deliverable	Progress	Delivered by 2025 or 2028
Becoming a child friendly town	Luton will be recognised as a UNICEF child-friendly town.	Child friendly Luton Steering Group established, first Luton School Council conference delivered and work underway with UNICEF.	2025
	Luton will be recognised as a child friendly town.	Child Friendly Luton Steering Group established, first Luton School Council conference delivered and work underway with UNICEF.	2028
	Luton will have a good or outstanding Ofsted rating for children’s services.	Positive visit in 2023 but no new grading given.	2025
	Luton will have a good or outstanding Ofsted rating for children’s services.	Positive visit in 2023 but no new grading given.	2028
	All children in Luton will be attending good or outstanding schools, leading to better educational outcomes.	90% achieved	2025
	Opening of a new centre of excellence for children with disabilities.	Capacity in the primary special school sector has increased from 205 to 435 places as at September 2022. 220 new secondary places have been created since September 2021.	2025
	Luton’s SEND strategy will have improved services and support for SEND children, young people and their families against our six SEND outcomes.	Work is progressing on four new SEND sites across the town, with work underway on one site, a planning application on another, and discussions ongoing at other sites.	2025
	More special school places and special educational provision to enable children with SEND to reach their full potential.	Have opened a new Primary Inclusion Unit , expansion of Lady Zia Werner Special School to a new site as well as growing cohort at Windmill Hill Special school.	2028
	An active Young People’s Council with more young people saying they have a voice that matters.	Delivered	2025
	An active young people’s council and young people’s citizen’s panels.	Youth council conference in December 2023.	2028

SYSTEMS LEADERSHIP

The Luton 2040 Vision relies on systems leadership. In Luton, this means working together with anyone who has a leadership role in the town whether from business, public sector or community to do the following things:

- direct our plans and programmes to deliver shared outcomes (as mapped out in the outcomes wheel)
- identify duplication and where resources could be directed elsewhere
- identify gaps and who is best to fill them
- provide support and challenge for each other

Using the framework for systems leadership developed by the Young Foundation we identified that we were strong as a system in convening and committing, looking and learning and engaging and energising. We identified that in order to mature our approach we needed to improve our accountability across the system. This includes having a measurement framework to help track progress and governance structures that enable us to review and revise our approach as we go. Our measurement framework is under development alongside the Road Map to 2040 as described above, with KPI's being identified alongside each of our target outcomes.

Our governance structure for Luton 2040 is also in the process of maturing, ensuring we have five boards responsible for delivering towards the target outcomes associated with their priority and an overarching Luton 2040 Strategic Board, made up of systems leaders from across key areas of delivery, to provide a clear steer, focus and accountability.

Currently our Luton 2040 boards include:

- Inclusive Economy board
- Health and Wellbeing board
- Children's Trust Board
- Fairness Taskforce
- Carbon Reduction Group
- Luton 2040 Joint Board.

These boards are in the process of being restructured to ensure that they are taking clear responsibility for their related target outcomes and regularly speaking to one another to ensure joined up working.

Through our developing Road Map and governance, our plans for long term structural and system change are set in motion. By the year 2040, we will have eradicated poverty Luton.



CIVIC AGREEMENT

Delivering our Luton 2040 Vision is only possible with the commitment and leadership of all parts of our local system, including our key anchor institutions. Many of these organisations have now made strong commitments through their Luton 2040 pledges and aligned their own organisational plans with our shared vision for the town.

The University of Bedfordshire is a prime example of this, having formally launched its civic agreement with the Council in 2023. The Civic agreement sets out the formal commitment of the University and Luton Council to work together, supported by residents, staff, students and other partners in doing so. Although there are 22 Civic Agreements nationally, this is the first one focused on the agenda of place.

The Civic Agreement is aligned with the Luton 2040 Vision and has a number of key focuses for delivery across these priorities, including:

- contributing to building an inclusive economy by addressing skills shortages across the private and public sector and shaping a diverse and dynamic talent pipeline for the town. The University is a key member of the Employment and Skills Partnership Board, working with other education providers and business representatives to address these skills shortages.
- undertaking locally relevant research to support evidence-based policy development across economic, social, health and environmental agendas to deliver Luton 2040. An example of this is the University's recent research into reducing harms to vulnerable residents in Luton town centre.
- leading by example and encouraging other anchor institutions to adapt and respond to the climate emergency, practising ethical procurement and delivering social value towards becoming a Net Zero town

The Civic Agreement has already begun to produce a number of close collaborative projects and innovation between the University of Bedfordshire, Luton Council and other partners. An example would be the University of Bedfordshire Research and Innovation Hub, a partnership with the ICB to ensure that we are continuing to improve Health outcomes.



MARMOT TOWN - ADDRESSING HEALTH INEQUALITIES

Luton is the first place in the UK to become a 'Marmot Town' and joins a growing number of 'Marmot Places', which include cities and regions, that are working with UCL Institute of Health Equity (IHE) to reduce health inequalities. A Marmot place is one which is strongly committed to tackling health inequalities through action on the social determinants of health - the social and economic conditions which shape our health - and has strong and effective plans and policies to achieve these reductions in health inequalities.

The Council has provided effective leadership by convening and driving the initial phase of evidence gathering by the IHE leading to the development of a bespoke report highlighting the evidence on how the social determinants affect health outcomes and contribute to health inequity in Luton. The report emphasised the significance of this initiative for Luton, its relevance to Luton 2040, and the need for a comprehensive approach involving various stakeholders. The report showed that even before the COVID-19 pandemic, Luton's life expectancy was lower than the national average, with significant disparities between different areas within the town. The report also notes high levels of preventable mortality, mental health issues, and the adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly due to factors such as population density, ethnic diversity, and economic conditions.

The report proposes various recommendations to address health inequalities in Luton. These include setting targets for health inequalities, expanding partnership approaches, developing health equity indicators, continuing community engagement initiatives, and establishing an implementation board based on the report's findings. Additionally, longitudinal research is suggested to monitor the impact of interventions, given Luton's high population turnover.

The report acknowledges the impact of local government beyond the public health department, emphasising that health equity should be a consideration in all policies. It notes a significant decrease in Luton Council's spending power and highlights the cost-effectiveness of investing in the social determinants of health. The recommendations for local government were: developing a health equity collaboration; creating an implementation plan based on the report; providing training for the workforce; strengthening links with business and healthcare; and launching a communications campaign.

The Council has continued to drive the implementation of the recommendations from the report as part of our 2040 agenda, in addition to undertaking the lead role in creating governance structures, articulating workstreams and priorities and leading on building capacity by holding workshops across different sectors (i.e VCFSE and anchor institutions). Luton Council is committed to working with partners and reviewing our evaluation to implement recommendations within the report itself and evaluation report.



FAIRNESS TASKFORCE

The heart of Luton's 2040 strategy is the commitment to tackle inequality, ensuring everyone in Luton has the opportunity to thrive and no-one has to live in poverty. To achieve this we need to deliver more equitable outcomes for all Luton residents, whilst ensuring everyone in Luton has the power to shape the future of the town.






Launched in November 2021, the Luton Fairness Taskforce is intentionally co-designed as a cross-sector and community-centred network to identify and overcome structural barriers on a range of social, economic and environmental challenges facing the town.

The Taskforce is radical in its scope, grounded in a strong and highly active civil society across the town and is increasingly recognised as an opportunity for collaboration and co-production by system partners.

In the short-term we want to build trust, share power, increase confidence and capacity within our communities to shift the needle on near-term, acute challenges that are affecting people's lives today. In the longer-term we want to forge a new way of working, new patterns of organising, across communities, state and business, where fairness (equity of access to essentials, opportunity, rewards and treatment) is a core principle across Luton's society and economy.

The high levels of involvement, trust and energy engendered through the Taskforce show that more equitable ways of working with people in the town are welcomed and embraced. With some seed funding and engagement with key institutions such as Bedfordshire and Luton Community Foundation, University of Bedfordshire, Luton Rising, and The Young Foundation, we have demonstrated that the Taskforce is a trusted and viable vehicle to take more dynamic and distributed action in key areas of concern to local people; particularly those from marginalised and low-income backgrounds.

Amongst other examples, the early work of the Taskforce has already mobilised community partnerships to deliver:

<p>Access to warm spaces, tackling loneliness and providing energy advice for 10,000 residents together with a Food First Network</p> 	<p>Employability days to link key local employers with young people from black African, black Caribbean and south Asian communities</p> 	<p>A £250K collaboration and innovation fund to generate VCFSE led solutions for a new community network and hub programme for the town</p> 	<p>Listening circles around violence against women and girls with the black Caribbean community</p> 	<p>Youth-led research into fairness and justice in the criminal justice system</p> 
---	---	---	---	--

All of this has been prompted, prioritised, shaped and designed by local people, with council and external support. Our role has been to hold open a new kind of space that is fully inclusive, where those who hold power are engaged listeners and where new kinds of partnerships and collaborations can dynamically emerge. It embodies a 'yes we can' attitude built on notions of collective action and collective impact.

This is necessary and timely work. The incredible challenges facing our country at large are felt acutely in a town like Luton. If we are to navigate those challenges public, private, academic and community groups have little choice – and lots to gain – in working together in new ways.

We are currently working to secure investment to build, sustain and spin out the necessary infrastructure to support and radically increase the scale, scope and impact of Luton's Fairness Taskforce (we are at final panel stage currently for a £1.8M UK Fund Lottery bid). Significant progress has relied so far on investment from the council and system partners and the aim is to leverage longer-term commitments, action and investment from key institutions in and around Luton.

ADDRESSING EXPLOITATION AND SERIOUS VIOLENCE

In common with localities experiencing higher levels of economic and social exclusion, Luton's community share deep-seated perceptions of unsafety. Whilst the picture is not significantly worse than other comparator localities, our engagement with diverse groups around the development of our Fairness Strategy confirmed that these concerns surface significantly around the vulnerability of young people to exploitation and criminality in the town. Intelligence from Bedfordshire Police shows concentrations of Serious Organised Crime (SOC), Organised Crime Groups (OCG) and County Lines activity centred on Luton. Most impactfully, over recent years, we have witnessed the very sad loss of young people to knife-crime, which has galvanised a groundswell of community concern.

Children who are vulnerable to criminal exploitation and then in contact with the youth justice system are usually some of the most marginalised in our communities. This is the group most likely to record poor health and education outcomes and many are subject to disproportionate levels of adversity (including parental substance misuse, mental health and domestic abuse, bereavement) and trauma. The critical issue that we are now working to understand is how children in Luton are drawn into criminal exploitation and offending through many of these factors largely out of their control. We need to identify and intervene earlier with those children whose vulnerability and safeguarding factors are likely to contribute to an increased risk of offending, in order to prevent and divert.

Our Community Safety Partnership (CSP), convened and coordinated by the council, has been at the forefront of the response to these critical community issues. By engaging directly with peoples' concerns, reaching out and extending multi-agency working to higher risk and hot-spot areas, and, with the development of a new CSP plan for 2024-28 underway across all its themes, ensuring that the work of the CSP is increasingly anchored in and aligned with 2040 priorities and focussed around whole system approaches to prevention, early intervention and co-production with our community.

Over the last 12 months we have instigated the first, place-based problem solving' partnership work in Luton - 'Dallow Cares' - which has seen a reduction in all crime figures including serious violence in the designated zone and built new relationships of resilience, collaboration and trust across local community networks. Early evaluation indicates this piece of work has saved an estimated £1.5 million by reducing crime, including a reduction in anti-social behaviour and organised crime.

In November 2023, following the most recent murder of 16 year of Ashraf Habiman, the CSP convened an immediate and extensive community conversation involving over 200 citizens and feedback from research involving 350 young people in the town, the CSP convened a community summit on tackling knife crime. Partnership action plans have been scoped across policing, education and community domains in the workstreams below:

- primary school-aged interventions to support children from year 4 and 5 so they get support and don't get radicalised/ groomed by gangs
- supported trusted relationships in schools with a focus on pastoral care and mentoring, creating a safe space in schools with a multi-agency partners
- jobs and skills development opportunities linked to big building procurement contracts to offer opportunities to local young people
- improve communication with police and agencies for young people to feel safe to report concerns without the risk of repercussions

- retrospective audit from birth of previously murdered/ criminally charged young people to understand what lessons can be learnt and where opportunities were missed
- building parental involvement in this work, improving communication with them and the wider community and towards consent
- safe spaces for young people in the community
- 'Build back Boys' – developing positive identity and tackling toxic masculinity cultures.

Delivery is already underway in a number of key areas and community sessions planned to extend collaboration, with highlights including:

- a 'Just Drop It' anti-knife campaign launched
- a 'Knife Angel' programme and visit planned for 2024
- Consequence Cards and app published and disseminated across community partners
- development of a shared vulnerability screening tool with the University of Bedfordshire, NHS, LBC, and Police
- a Social Value procurement review to identify new opportunities for young people
- a cross CSP commissioning review to identify and confirm opportunities for strengthening collaboration

Moving forward, under a new theme of 'Safeguarding Children Against Criminal Exploitation and Offending', our new CSP plan is now driving forward a range of partnership initiatives to:

- gain a better understanding and respond to the changing nature of youth crime and criminal exploitation in Luton, particularly committed within the context of being exploited by others
- support and develop the local Multi Agency Gangs Panel (MAGPan) and work with statutory, non-statutory and community based services to develop a framework of targeted early intervention and prevention to ensure that children are not criminally exploited
- ensure our triage and diversion services to the local police station in Luton when children are arrested are robust and diversion and prevention services are suitably targeted
- develop and extend successful programmes such as the Amber Unit, Supported Transitions and the Tree Project to provide specialist targeted earlier intervention to children and their families



REDUCING UNEMPLOYMENT

The 2024 Centre for Cities Report showed that Luton has the third highest unemployment benefit claimant rate in the country. The Luton Employment and Skills Plan (LESP) is making significant strides in addressing unemployment and fostering skill development in the town. The strategic priorities outlined in the plan are driving innovative initiatives to create job opportunities, particularly focusing on aligning education and training with the needs of local businesses.

The town has witnessed a decrease in the proportion of unemployed individuals from 5.6 per cent in 2022 to 4.8 per cent in June 2023. Major successes include improved educational outcomes with 50.4 per cent of disadvantaged pupils achieving Grade 4+ in English and maths. Moreover, 92 per cent of Luton schools/colleges have Ofsted ratings of Good or better.

The Luton Employment Skills Plan has four strategic priorities:

Skills driving economic recovery and growth:

1

- Partnerships with Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce, SEMLEP, and Luton Council are addressing business skill needs, focusing on green jobs, digital skills, and health and science capacity-building.
- The University of Bedfordshire's Pathways to Recovery Entrepreneurs Masterclasses are supporting economically inactive residents in exploring self-employment.
- Luton is actively involving employers in forums such as the Luton Developer's Forum to attract local talent into the construction sector.

Developing a pipeline of talented and resilient people:

2

- 100 per cent of schools and colleges are now part of the SEM Careers Hub, and 94 per cent achieved Gatsby Benchmark #8, showcasing strong employer engagement.
- The Legacy Group Programme is addressing barriers for young people, providing insight activities and resource booklets in collaboration with local employers.

Tackling long-term inequality and economic inactivity:

3

- Progress in supporting disadvantaged students is evident, with increased GCSE pass rates.
- Adult and lifelong learning participation has risen, and initiatives like ESOL courses are catering to diverse needs.
- Collaboration with businesses, such as through the Disability Confident Employer event, is fostering inclusivity.

Creating an adaptable, upskilled workforce:

4

- Higher level occupations in Luton have increased, and meaningful work experience opportunities at Barnfield College are preparing students for their careers.
- The relaunched Luton Employment & Skills Provider Forum is commissioning training provision aligned with the LESP.
- The University of Bedfordshire's Help2Grow Management course is contributing to business leaders' skills development.

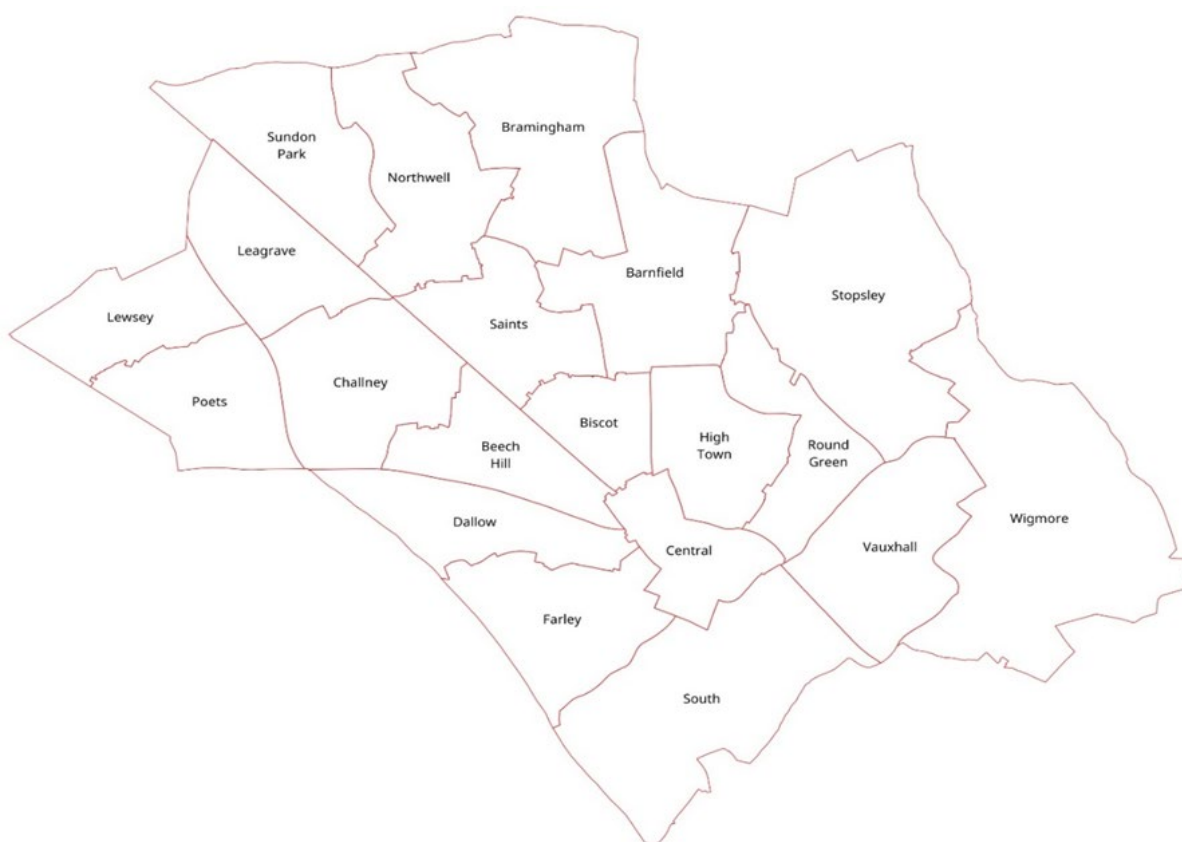
**LUTON
2040**

GOVERNANCE AND CULTURE



GOVERNANCE, DECISION-MAKING AND RISK MANAGEMENT

Luton Council consists of 48 members or councillors, elected by local residents in May 2023. The 48 Councillors represent the interests of 20 wards, as reshaped by the recent ward boundary review. Each ward is a neighbourhood within the town, as per diagram below.



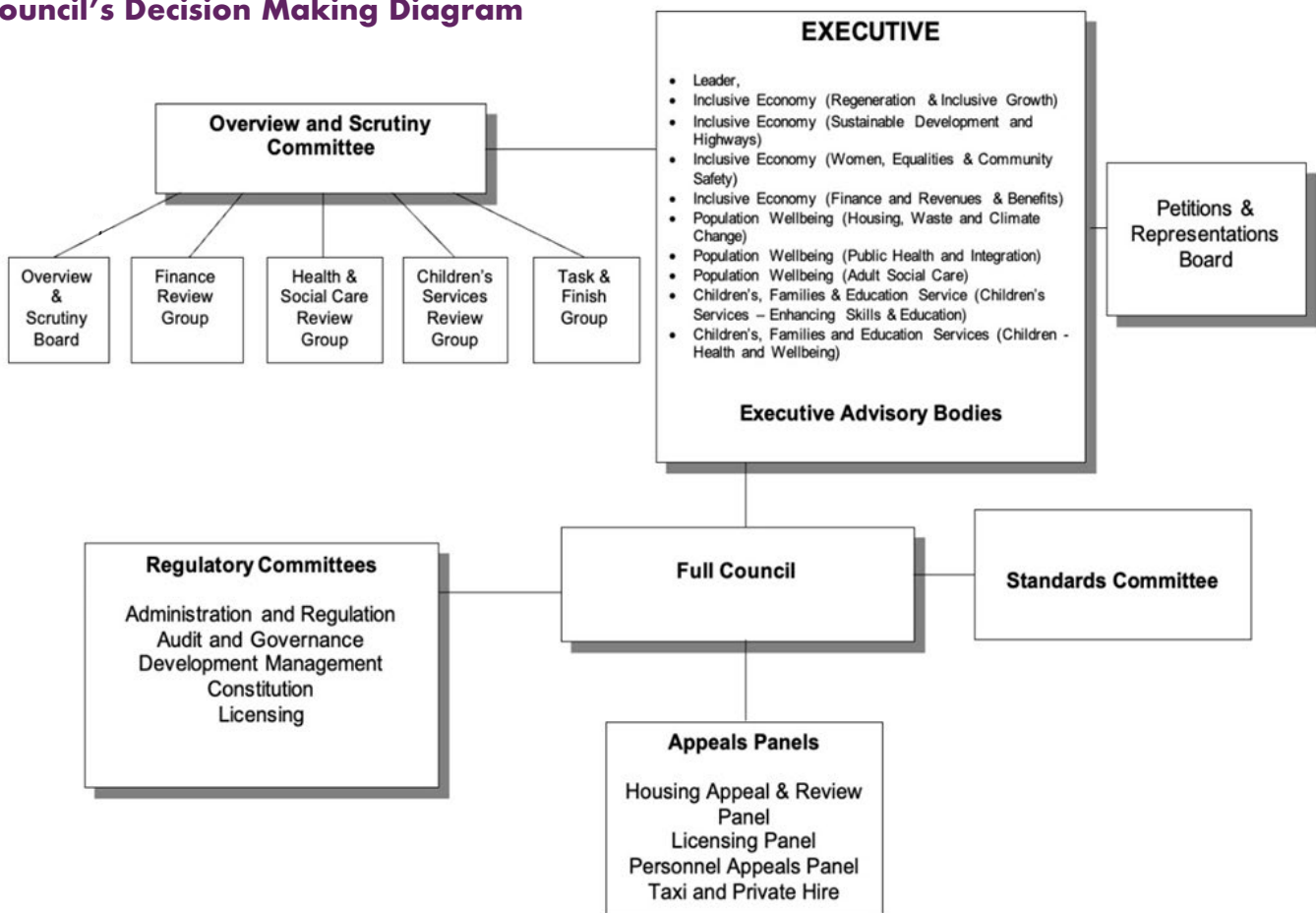
There are 29 Labour Councillors; 15 Liberal Democrats; and 4 Conservatives.

Member Officer relations are generally strong and positive in Luton. There is a clear understanding of the respective roles of Members and Officers and a clear environment of trust and appropriate challenge with political consensus that Luton 2040 is the priority for the Town. The Constitution was updated in 2022 and the Scheme of Delegation in 2023, ensuring that decision making is clear.

Luton Council has a clear structure in place for the decision making process, which begins at an officer level (see table below), but ultimately feeds into the political decision-making process, incorporating scrutiny, non-executive, executive and full council processes, as appropriate.

Meeting Group	Membership
Corporate Leadership Team (CLT)	Chief Executive and Corporate Directors
Corporate Leadership Management Team (CLMT)	As above but also including S151, DASS, DPH and Monitoring Officer
Senior Management Leadership Group (SMLG)	All Corporate and Service Directors
Directorate Departmental Management Team (DMT) Meetings	All Corporate and Service Directors
Luton Leaders	SMLG plus all reports to Service Directors (c100 officers)
Area Senior Management Team Meetings (SMT)	Service Directors and reports meetings
Other service level meetings	Various

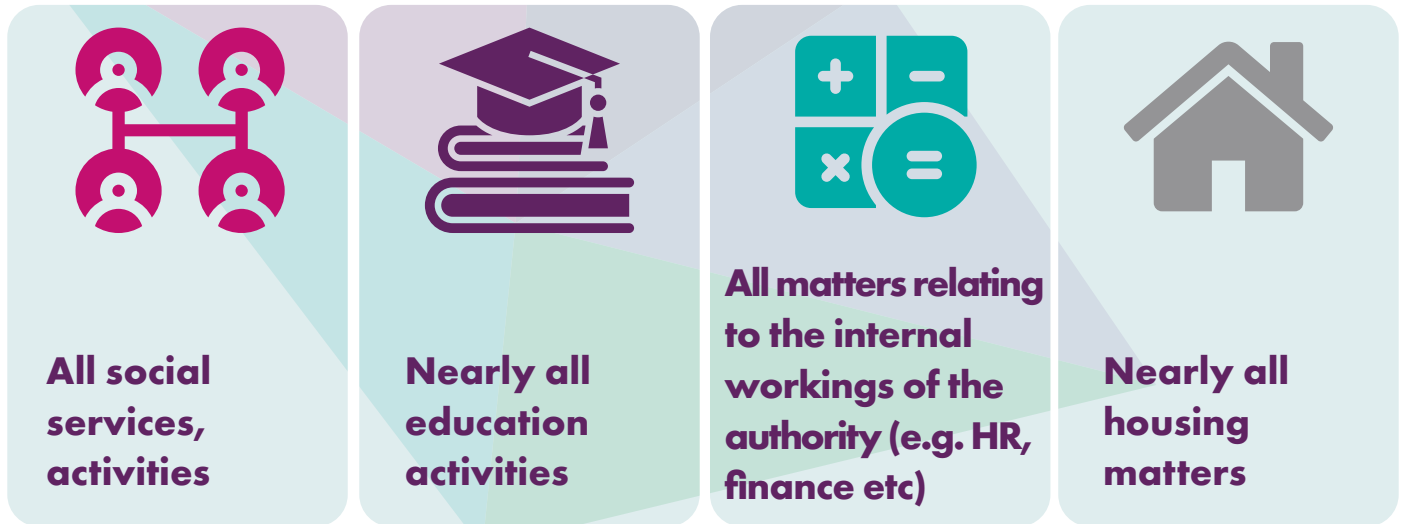
Council’s Decision Making Diagram



The Executive

The Executive is responsible for the majority of the council's activities. Some matters are exempt from these arrangements and are dealt with by committees (see below) and are non-executive functions. They form a small proportion of the council's overall activities.

The Executive's responsibilities include:



Whilst the law provides for individual Executive members to make decisions on their own, Luton Council has chosen not to do this, so 'portfolio holders' have an advisory role. This means that they discuss matters with relevant officers and are responsible for presenting and recommending proposals and actions to the Executive to make decisions collectively.

Non-Executive functions are carried out by regulatory committees. The Council's regulatory committees are:

- Standards Committee - responsible for councillors' conduct
- Development Control Committee - responsible for planning applications and related matters
- Administration and Regulation Committee - responsible for a range of licensing and environmental protection matters and for certain civic administration matters (e.g. elections) and other matters which are specified (e.g. pensions)
- Constitution Committee - responsible for making recommendations to council on changes to the council's constitution
- Licensing Committee - responsible for carrying out the functions of the Licensing Act 2003

The regulatory committees are politically balanced, which mean membership of the committee is in proportion to party representation on the council. Standards Committee also currently includes five independent members who are not members of the council.

Scrutiny arrangements

All Executive functions are subject to scrutiny. Scrutiny arrangements comprise an overview and scrutiny committee (OSC), which is the overarching committee and responsible for setting up four sub-committees:

- Overview and Scrutiny Board
- Finance Review Group
- Health and Social Care Review Group
- Children Services Review Group

The OSC also has the responsibility to set up time limited 'task and finish' groups to review areas of policy or special interest to local people and thereafter make recommendations or comments to inform executive decisions.

We also utilise time limited task and finish groups to review major decisions, such as the Luton DART investment, and or recommend that alternative decisions be taken, review major areas of the council's policy or activity, and make recommendations to the Executive or to Full Council.

Although scrutiny committees have no power to take decisions, they hold the Executive or decision makers to account in order to add value and improve policies etc. There are three types of scrutiny, major scrutiny, review of decisions after they have been implemented and 'Call-In' where decisions that have not yet been implemented are scrutinised.

Petitions and Representations Board

The Petitions and Representations Board:

- receives and considers petitions within the council's petitions scheme
- addresses matters of concern to local communities within any areas of the town
- makes recommendations, comments or gives advice to the executive, council or committee as appropriate

Appeal panels

The council's judicial type business (e.g. licensing, homelessness appeals, personnel appeals) is dealt with by appeal panels. The housing appeal and review panel has a membership of five drawn from a pool of members, the other appeals panels have a membership of three drawn from a pool of members appointed for the purpose and trained in the particular area.

There are some appeal panels which have a statutory membership (which does not include elected council members) and statutory terms of reference (e.g. the education admission and exclusion appeal panels).

Full Council

Some decisions are required to be made by Full Council, although these are relatively few under the executive and scrutiny arrangements.

Full Council is responsible for:

- adopting and amending the council's constitution
- approving, adopting or amending the policy framework
- approving, adopting or amending the budget framework

Full Council also receives recommendations from regulatory committees such as Development Control Committee and referred recommendations from any two members of a regulatory committee under Standing Order 71.1.

There is a period known as 'question time' at the beginning of each council meeting lasting 45 minutes. This gives councillors the opportunity to submit written questions in advance of the Executive leader, executive members and chairs of regulatory committees and scrutiny. The question rules are set out in the council's constitution.

The Council's Constitution

The Council has adopted a constitution which contains details of all the rules under which the council operates which can also be found on the Council's website.

The Council's Constitution was reviewed by a core project team (the Monitoring Officer, Deputy Monitoring Officer and Democracy Manager) during 2022, examining every part of the existing Constitution to determine whether it needed to be retained, combined or dispensed of, so that it met the following objectives:

- ensure that the Constitution was brought up to date and to make it easier to keep the Constitution up to date in the future
- wherever possible, express the Constitution in plain English and make it easier to navigate
- reduce the size of the Constitution
- improve the connections between the different parts of the Constitution

Luton Council's commercial companies and joint ventures

The Luton Shareholder Group (LSG) is a cross party Executive Advisory Group established to provide advisory, non-decision making oversight of Luton Council's commercial companies and Joint Ventures.

It has no formal decision making power but advises and makes recommendations to the Executive on the way in which the Council conducts itself as shareholder and how the Executive's representative should vote on and consent to reserved matters affecting the governance of the company.

All shareholder decisions will remain with the Executive, or Full Council, as appropriate.

The LSG's remit will include all of the Council's wholly-owned and joint-venture companies and entities where the Council has a significant interest.

The Luton Group Companies are currently:



As part of the Capitalisation Directive from Government in 2021 CIPFA conducted a detailed review of the Governance Arrangements of our relationship with Group companies on behalf of the Secretary of State. This was a positive and helpful experience and the majority of the recommendations made have been fully implemented, including the appointment of an Independent Chair and Non Executive Directors for LLAL.

Risk management

The council's Risk Management Strategy provides a framework to ensure that risks and opportunities are managed effectively, which is also an essential part of good corporate governance. The strategy is designed to strengthen, support and embed risk management across the council to ensure opportunities are maximised; there is effective delivery of services; and objectives are met, including the achievement of the strategic priorities set out in the Corporate Plan to deliver the Luton 2040 vision.

All risks are recorded on the council's risk management system, and are assigned to Risk Owners for review and monitoring. The system issues automatic reminders for Risk Owners to update their risk assessments and control measures when they become due for review. E-learning training on risk and how to use the system is available to Risk Owners. Risk management training is delivered corporately to Officers and Members. New members of staff who have been assigned risks also receive risk management training on a one to one basis.

Corporate risks are reported to the Internal Governance Group, Corporate Leadership Management Team, and Audit and Governance Committee for review on a quarterly basis.

Members Leadership Development

A councillor support and development programme is in place, which aims to provide members with skills and other information to enhance their potential as a councillor. This is coordinated by the Council's Business and Member Support function.

A blend of mandatory and recommended training is provided and the Member Development Strategic Steering Group (MDSSG), with officer and cross party membership, has a role in developing and promoting the programme, identifying learning needs and supporting councillor development plans.

Member Development Charter Plus status was achieved in January 2017 and re-accreditation gained again in 2020. The council has committed to seek re-accreditation to Charter Plus in 2024/25.

In addition, members are supported by various teams, notably the council's Social Justice and Communications teams, in terms of their community leadership role of advocate, facilitator and decision-maker. This includes aspects of community engagement, leadership and applying the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion to aspects of their roles such as listening to and involving local communities, working effectively in partnerships and empowering local communities.

Practically, this includes members fronting 'Let's talk' or annual 'Luton Citizens' Fund' events within their areas, (where participatory budgeting is used to fund hundreds of grassroots 'Luton 2040' neighbourhood projects), training on media and social media, to deal with Luton's complex challenges and bespoke training on equality and diversity and unconscious bias, to support elected members in making Luton a fairer and more cohesive society.



ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE

Our Corporate Values

Designed by staff, for staff – our values are now a key driver of everything we do.

Hundreds of our employees redesigned our council values. This was the result...

Collaborative - we work as one team, producing great results

Ambitious - we're determined to improve lives every day

Respectful - we are open, honest and embrace difference

Empowering - we trust our own decisions and those of others

Supportive - we help each other to reach our full potential



An authentic set of values can support our vision and goals, helping to make us more productive by focusing us all on delivering our priorities.

Our values:

- underpin the way we operate as an organisation
- influence our choices and our behaviours
- provide a golden thread running through everything we do

Our values are being incorporated into every aspect of our working lives, and at every level - from council leaders signing a commitment to uphold our values, right through to values-based training.

Staff feedback

Our staff survey, which was conducted late 2022, gave people the chance to tell us how we are performing as an employer. 2023's picture to emerge was a mixed one, with some very good things going on and some changes needed as acknowledged by the council's Corporate Leadership Team.

More than 1,100 people responded to the survey, providing the genuine insight needed in order to make Luton Council a place where staff want to do great work.

Some of the key findings included:

- A healthy majority of staff felt that working at the council provides a feeling of personal accomplishment and makes people want to perform to the best of their ability.
- too many colleagues feel stressed at work, a number of people struggle at least occasionally with their workload and too many people expressed that they don't always have the information they need to do their job well
- too many staff in some specific areas told us that they don't think the council's values are demonstrated in the way the organisation is led, the way some colleagues behave or the way some decisions are made.
- many staff are fully behind our core 2040 vision
- some staff could not connect 2040 aims to their day-to-day role with its delivery

The results were discussed with staff across various forums, including our Luton Leaders meeting, sessions with front line staff and at staff conferences held each year. Employees were encouraged to submit ideas and be involved in driving positive change across the council.

COMMUNICATIONS

Over recent years, the council's communications strategy has sought to address the reactive nature of our comms service and has worked towards moving to a much more proactive, evidence-led approach, working with partners such as the police, Integrated Care Board (ICB), community organisations and our airport operators to deliver more outcome-focused communications that align with key 2040 indicators.

This has been partly successful, but the department still deals with lots of last minute requests and changing priorities that shift as events happen that are outside of our control. The nature of Luton's global population, for example, means that worldwide events resonate strongly among Luton's communities. The recent conflict in the Middle East saw protests and strong feelings being expressed, with the council being the target of some of this. As such, there remains an important reactive element to our communications work.

Key channels and strategies include:

External:

- eLuton: an e-newsletter which we use to issue council and town-wide news and information to 33,000 residents who are subscribed on a weekly basis
- social media: an active following of over 60,000 people across the council's social media accounts – X (Twitter), Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube, with our reach amplified by using the channels of our system partners
- weekly briefing from the Chief Executive to all councillors with key information for members to pass on to their constituents through their own channels and networks
- ad hoc and campaign-specific communications to our faith and community leaders to pass key information onto our communities, especially from those communities who do not access mainstream media or council channels
- engagement with media and press include Luton News (Luton's only local newspaper), mainstream and community radio stations, and TV
- community engagement at events and busy public spaces (eg The Mall) to speak to residents as they walk by and provide information on key system-wide services and get their feedback and challenges. A recent example of this saw council leadership engage with residents in the town centre around ongoing issues around cost of living, following the announcement of a rise in council tax
- Lutonlife – a partnership magazine delivered to 60,000 households in Luton with contributions from the ICB, police, fire service, airport and other key partners which provides system wide messages and signposting



Internal:

- weekly eBrief from the Chief Executive (or one of his corporate directors) to the whole organisation. We request that copies are printed and put in communal areas for those staff not on the network. Staff not on the network are still not able to access this weekly eBrief on their personal devices
- weekly briefing for members, which includes specific high level information for members to be alerted to
- Intranet – issues surrounding two-factor verification have made this channel less impactful, but it remains a key point for news and updates for council staff
- Management Brief – monthly email/briefing from the Chief Executive sent to top three tiers of management with a specific request to disseminate information to their teams in team meetings. Especially important for those teams where staff aren't on the council's network
- staff conferences – held twice a year with usually around 200 people joining in person and 800-900 joining online. This is led by CLT and offers two-way communications between the organisation and the senior team

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

The Council's renewed commitments to strengthening its strategic work to promote Equity and Social Justice as part of its community leadership role to deliver the 2040 vision and address structural inequality, are clearly articulated in the refreshed 2040 Vision and new Social Justice Strategy.

The strategy sets out three key dimensions for the council's commitment and work towards a town built on fairness:

- workforce and culture
- services for our super-diverse community and residents
- providing community leadership working alongside our citizens and VCFSE/civil society

The council's People Strategy has an EDI foundation, and a working group, led by the corporate director for children and families and service director for organisational development, is now focussing on driving key priority issues for improvement and change such as: anti-discriminatory practice; staff engagement; workforce representation across different levels of the organisation; recruitment, staff development, progression and retention; and culture and cultural awareness. This is underpinned by regular gender and ethnicity pay-gap reporting, as well as member scrutiny via feedback to full council on 2021 Black Lives Matter and Global Majority Workforce motions and others. Discussions are also underway with the trade unions to explore signing up to a shared TU and LBC anti-racism charter. One of the key elements of the motions was the commitment to the 2% year on year increase in the diversity of the workforce (in reality meaning that 50% of new recruits need to be none white british)- which we are achieving and our gender pay gap stands at -1.5% compared to the public sector at 11.5%.

In terms of wider governance and service planning, the Fairness Strategy has seen the establishment a new EDI board and initiated recruitment of EDI coordinators across all departments. Their role is to support service directors and DMTs leadership on equity and EDI commitments, including employing a refreshed holistic Integrated Impact Assessment framework, and new annual service planning requirements to identify and deliver equity priorities across the three strategy dimensions in the services for which they are responsible to give a clearer focus on explicit equity targets to strengthen EDI commitment and compliance.

In order to strengthen and improve corporate commitment, prioritisation and focus on the Fairness and EDI agenda (including PSED compliance), we are currently reviewing the EDI Board with the aim of implementing future arrangements that will involve Members, Corporate Directors and Service Directors more proactively and create stronger links of support and challenge on this critical agenda to the overall corporate leadership and senior management improvement and change programme. A current SJU restructure to remodel and enhance the service and its capacity around the Fairness Strategy priorities plans also to provide a firmer foundation and additional drive for accelerating this work.

With a town built on fairness as a core pillar of Luton 2040, we are extending our commitment to tackling prejudice and discrimination and promoting equity across system partnerships as a key aspect of the council's community leadership role. Some examples include:

- developing support and network cooperation on EDI and culture change across anchor institutions and system partners, starting with a 'Talk Listen Change' health inequality pilot, and extending this to develop and deepen shared learning and direct collaboration around common EDI challenges
- building fairness and social justice principles into support for the community leadership role of ward councillors and delivery of VCFSE strategic and grassroots programmes such as the Fairness Taskforce and Luton Citizen's Fund
- bringing forward system programmes in response to community voice and need, such as an explicit theme on making Luton 'no place for hate' and tackling hate incidents and crime through the new Community Safety Partnership Plan 2024 – 28, exploration around Luton being a Disability-friendly Town and a new initiative to building community networks across health and community partnerships to support the most vulnerable and excluded groups in the town around cost of living pressures



**LUTON
2040**

FINANCIAL PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT



LUTON'S FINANCIAL POSITION

Luton Council, like many councils up and down the country, has been facing increasingly severe pressures on its finances over the past number of years. In particular, price increases and the growing demand for housing, adult social care and children's services are putting a strain on our finances.

We do not believe that Central Government provides us with adequate funding for the many important services we are required to provide and residents rely on. Data from the Institute for Fiscal Studies shows that we have the second lowest public spending compared to need in the country, second only to Dudley, with £278 less spending per person than we need. It means that we are not on an equal footing with other places within the UK in terms of funding.

At a time when people need more help and assistance than ever before, the gap between the resources Central Government are prepared to offer and the reality on the ground has never been greater. In the past 12 years we have already had £170m taken out of our budget meaning drastic savings and resource reductions year on year. On a like-for-like basis we had circa 4,200 members of staff in 2010. Today, with more responsibility and an increased population of 11 per cent we now have an estimated 2,700 members of staff.

Whilst we have successfully been able to increase funding to some priority areas, such as £1m additional into Street Cleansing in 2022/23, it is clear that many areas of the organisation are stretched.

Because of these challenges, regrettably, we anticipate having to raise Luton Council's share of the council tax for financial year 2024/25 by the maximum amount we are able to do so without asking for a local referendum (4.99 per cent). At the same time the police and fire services are proposing increases to the amount residents pay them. In addition, we will have to raise charges for some of the important services we provide for residents.

Even with the increase, Luton's average B and D Council Tax is the lowest in Bedfordshire and we will continue to operate our council tax support scheme for those who are struggling the most and are not able to afford council tax. With a disproportionate number of properties in this category compared to other authorities, we are able to claim less council tax than most (£97m which is 16.8 per cent of our income), putting us under further financial pressures.

In order to maintain a balanced budget and provide a good level of service to our 225,000 residents, we have had to find innovative ways to increase our income. Luton Rising is one of those innovations – an airport company, owned by our council for the full benefit of the people in Luton. Since 1998, Luton Rising has paid a dividend of £257m into the council, enabling us to fund services and over the last 25 years provide £180m of funding to voluntary and community organisations across the town. This equates to 53p per passenger, 26 times more than any other UK airport.

Pre pandemic the Airport grew strongly following a renewed strategy from LBC and LLAL and over the period 2014-2020 was the fastest growing major UK airport hitting 18m passengers a year in 2019. Part of this strategy was addressing the Airports structural weaknesses which led to LLAL acquiring significant land abutting the Airport site; starting the process to diversify revenue streams; opening up future growth through the application for a Development Consent Order (DCO) to move capacity to 32m a year; and enabling this growth through investment in the Luton DART. This work contributed to an increase in the value of LLAL from £530m to £1.2bn and a 5 times increase in revenue to LBC from LLAL.

However, during the pandemic, our airport stood at a standstill and so did the dividend coming into the council. In response, we were the first council to announce an emergency budget and managed, because of our shrewd and innovative approach, to come through the pandemic with yet another balanced budget. Unfortunately we are still very much feeling the effects of the pandemic, and do not expect to see a dividend paid into the council until 2026/2027.

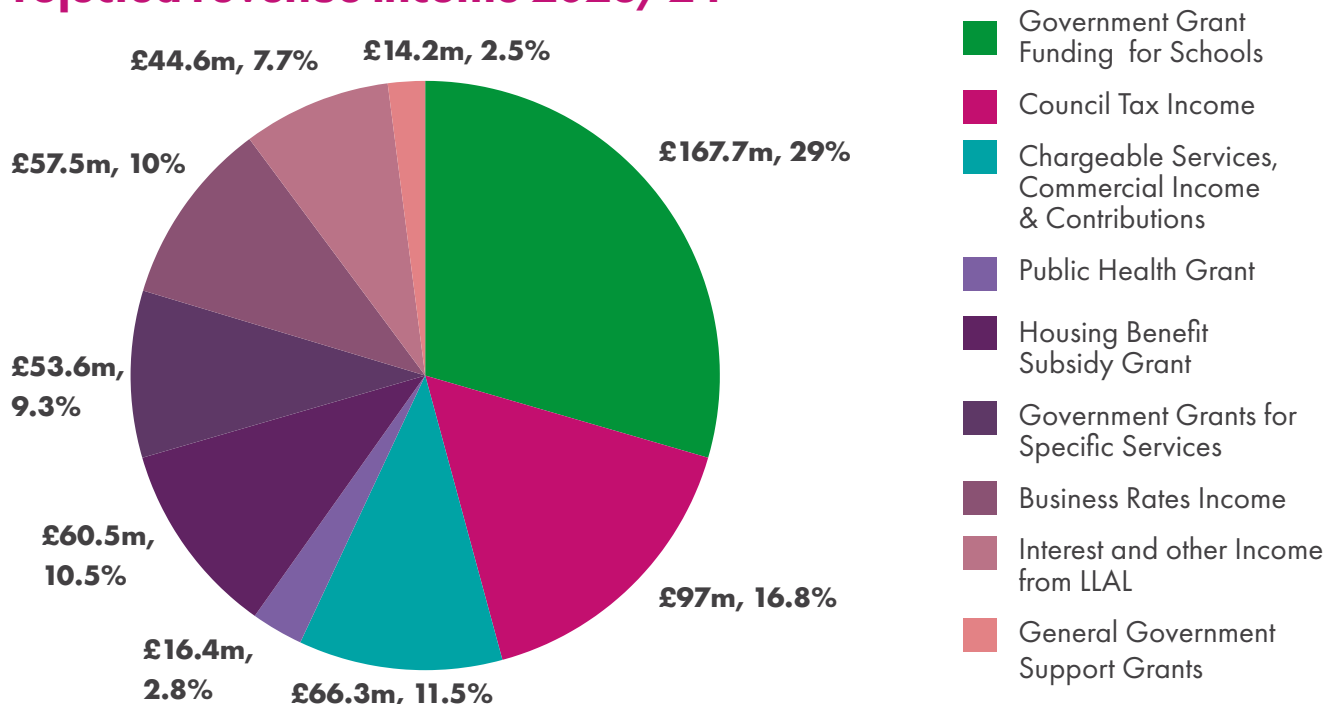
Despite this, we have still been able to maintain our funding to the voluntary and community sector with only a 10 per cent drop in giving over that period, helping to sustain 100s of projects and programmes that improve the lives of local people. Additionally we currently still make £28m of profit a year on the loans we have made to Luton Rising.

In order to reduce risk in the future, when the dividend from LLAL recommences we have agreed that it will not be used to fund the Revenue Budget, so avoiding the structural weakness in the future. It will only be used to fund the Capital programme, which is far easier to turn off and on.

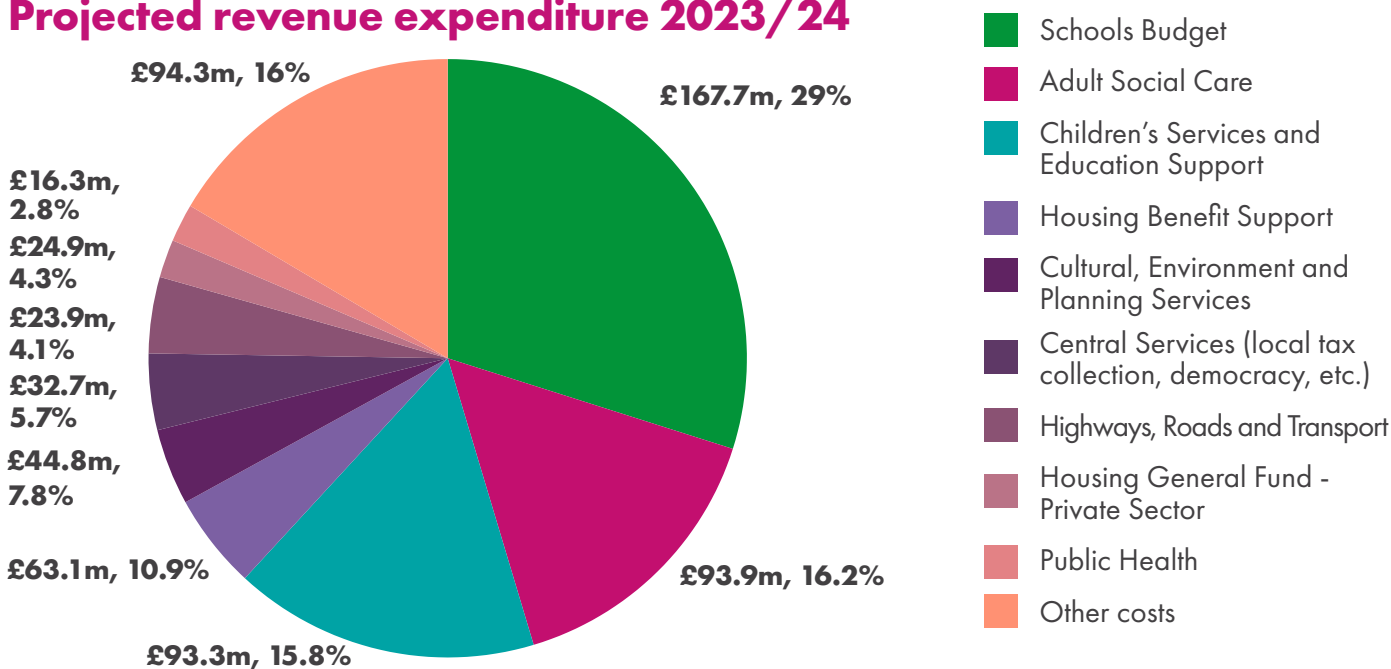
Another innovation is Foxhall Homes, our council owned housing company, which alongside providing 245 quality homes into the community, of which 30 per cent are affordable, and has also provided a dividend to the council of £300,000 in 23/24. Connect 2 Luton, our recently formed council owned recruitment company an average of 400 staff per month into Luton Council and is due to pay us their first dividend of a projected £200,000 for the financial year 22/23.

Our projected expenditure for 2023/2024 is £577.8m. A break down of this can be seen below.

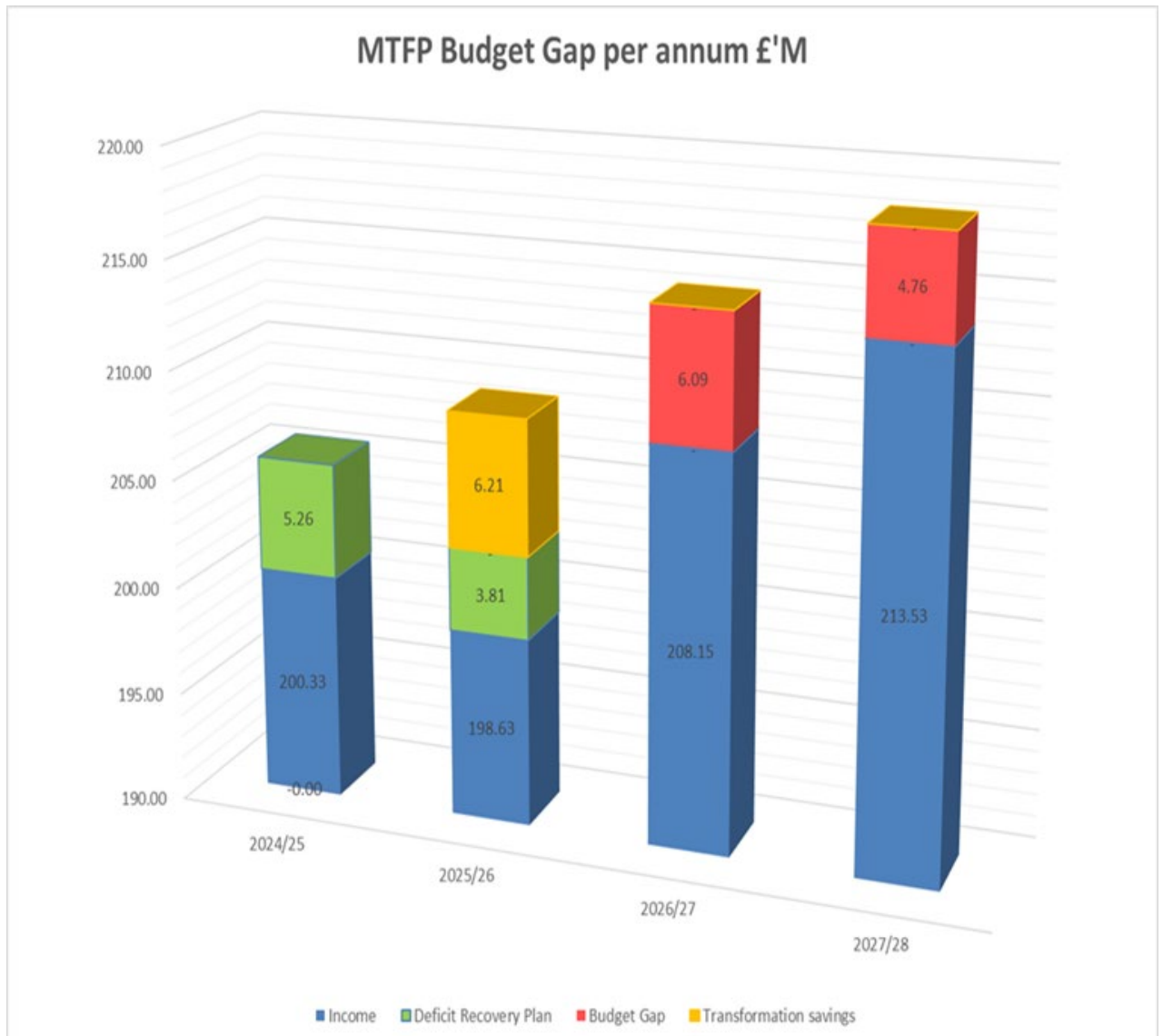
Projected revenue income 2023/24



Projected revenue expenditure 2023/24



As a result of the challenges we face to our budget, Luton has a Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) gap of £10.9m (to 27/28).



Without any further support from central government, we are doing the following to ensure a balanced budget:

- supporting departments to manage demand and deliver services within the existing budget and achieve the income target as budgeted
- renegotiating contracts to reduce the inflation pressure to what is affordable
- supporting departments to work on detailed and robust 24/25 deficit recovery plans
- preparing detailed development and delivery plans for all transformation projects and start delivery in 2024/25
- the deficit recovery and transformation plans will be subject to the value for money and financial resilience audit to be carried out by our external auditors in April 2024
- a moratorium on the recruitment of agency workers, unless life and limb posts, or agreed at Departmental Management Team meetings

Our transformation programme on page 83 sets out in more detail how we plan to make longer term savings and bring in income that will ensure we continue to manage a balanced budget whilst delivering a good service for our residents in the years to come.

We have not, do not need to, and do not intend to use general fund reserves to balance our Revenue Budget.

LUTON'S AUDIT POSITION

The Internal Audit Service plays an essential role in supporting the council in achieving its objectives and outcomes, through a review of its governance and risk management processes and systems of internal control. The effectiveness of the council's governance arrangements is assessed on an annual basis. For 2023/24, this audit will be undertaken by Mazars and the scope will cover a review of the corporate governance framework, including the governance, monitoring and reporting arrangements in place over the council's subsidiary companies; ethics and culture; and risk management arrangements.

The Head of Audit also delivers an annual audit opinion on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the council's control environment and a Report which is used to inform the Annual Governance Statement.

Regarding external Audit, a detailed position regarding external auditor and historic position is attached as a supporting document. This has resulted in Luton Council issuing Ernst and Young a formal complaint per the supporting document.

Relationships with our new auditor, Grant Thornton, for 23/24 are positive and a plan has been tabled by them for this years Value for Money review with an expectation that this years audit will be complete by December 24, addressing the lack of previous year's audits.



LUTON
2040

CAPACITY FOR IMPROVEMENT



Often visitors remark on the resilience of our community. We are used to dealing with challenges and it is this practice that has made us innovative, agile and adaptable. These qualities permeate throughout our approach to people, transformation and performance, giving us a dynamism that allows us to constantly improve.

ADAPTING TO CHALLENGES

Luton has been through many challenges. During the pandemic we had one of the highest death rates in the country and our local economy was drastically impacted with huge job loss and lack of income. Alongside the rest of the country we were hit by the cost of living crisis, further impacting on people's standard of living. Our rich heritage of global migration into Luton means that recent conflicts happening across the world are felt very deeply in our community.

And all this over the backdrop of our ever present climate crisis and decreasing environmental conditions - contributing to poorer health outcomes for our community and global migration.

But Luton is resilient.

During the pandemic we demonstrated this resilience. The community came together in an outstanding act of support - donating huge volumes of food and essential items and volunteering their time to help others in need. As a council we were able to draw on this, fulfilling a coordinating role to deliver support. This outpouring of support kick started our Luton Supporting You, Community Hubs and Food First Programme, ensuring that all our communities have the means to support one another.

Luton Supporting You works by bringing together community support all under one roof, and includes 52 venues providing free food and community support, 20 warm spaces and provides support, guidance and training across schools and the community. The website housing this information has 24,694 unique users (around 10 per cent of our population). Alongside this our Community Hubs bring coordination to groups that need to access further support for those they are working with, by bringing them into partnership with other groups who can help. We estimate that this programme has brought in an additional £100,000 of goods and services into the local community. Alongside this our Community Network and Family Hub projects have been launched as instruments for supporting grassroots organisations to provide help to their own communities.

Since 2010, climate change adaptation has become an integral part of our corporate risk management strategy and has been brought into even further focus through the Luton 2040 vision.

Our approach involves aligning climate change adaptation with business continuity. This has proven especially crucial in our ability to plan for and respond to extreme weather events, a resilience that was tested and enhanced in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic. We also have clear plans in place to decrease flood risk, including strategically engaging in a £8.5m initiative for a flood storage area on Houghton Brook and successfully delivering the Hat Gardens project which incorporates improved flood storage and microclimate enhancements.

Our Net Zero Roadmap, outlines specific actions addressing biodiversity and resilience and preparedness for seasonal extremes is embedded in our operations, with dedicated plans in place for both summer heatwaves and winter cold temperatures events. The Luton Town Centre Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) underscores our commitment to sustainable urban planning including provisions for shading, solar gain mitigation, and addressing the urban heat island effect.

Alongside this our Net Zero Roadmap sets out clear plans for sustainable transport including:

- installing 600 publicly accessible charge points
- investing significantly in low carbon transport and infrastructure such as alternative fuels for the council fleet
- investment in bus services
- implementation of a car club and mobility hubs by 2027
- adoption of a long-term plan to improve cycling and walking infrastructure to support higher levels of active travel
- deliver highway improvements along Vauxhall Way, as part of Major Road Network Funding
- strengthen to East-West connectivity and surface access to London Luton Airport

We are not merely adapting to climate change but actively leading in the development and implementation of resilient strategies, ensuring a sustainable and secure future for the communities we serve.

PEOPLE

Our People Strategy is the key framework for supporting, developing and growing our workforce to enable and empower them to be the best they can be and deliver quality services to our residents.

The agility of the strategy enables us to respond to opportunities and challenges – more recently the labour market challenges, cost of living, post-pandemic, health and wellbeing, the council's savings agenda and the rapid changes to how we work. Our People Strategy sets out how we intend to recruit, develop and enable our workforce to deliver key strategic priorities and is an important strategy for achieving our Luton 2040 ambitions.

Recruitment has been a particular issue for the organisation. Social workers, housing officers, highways engineers, finance and legal officers, and people working in building control have all been challenging roles to fill. This can cause fragility and instability and distracts from the great work that is being delivered. Whilst the position is slightly improved, with additional revenue investment in the recruitment team in 22/23, and much work is being done, this remains an area of concern and focus. After a period of natural churn the senior team of the organisation is now permanent (apart from the SD IT role), with a series of successful appointments that have substantially strengthened the organisation and improved collaboration and systems working.

Having an effective, efficient and engaged workforce helps us to drive forward and deliver our 2040 vision by:

- ensuring a strong workforce that delivers high quality services to our communities
- leading by example as a key Anchor organisation in Luton as a Good Employer
- developing a workforce reflective of our community
- providing quality jobs pathways for local residents
- inspiring and providing opportunities for our young people and acting as corporate parent for our looked after children
- building an empowered, representative workforce whose voices are heard
- fostering a culture of innovation, continuous improvement and values-led behaviours

People strategy activities are underpinned by: our values; equalities, diversity and inclusion; health and wellbeing; Effective leadership and quality service delivery.

People Strategy 2023-2026

Our strategy will equip and develop our workforce to deliver our 'Luton 2040' vision

How it will support our corporate priorities



Leading by example as a key anchor organisation and employer

A resilient and competent workforce that delivers high quality services to our communities

A culture of innovation, continuous improvement and values led behaviours

Inspiring our young people as a corporate parent for looked after children

Our success measures

Increased opportunities for our local young people

Staff survey completion rates increase

Employees feel proud to work for Luton

Increased take up of development opportunities and internal appointments

No gender or ethnicity pay gap

All staff report having regular conversations with managers

Increased job applications from local residents

Reduced vacancy levels

Health and wellbeing support is accessible to everyone in the organisation



Our ambition to become a Marmot Town means leading by example

Ensuring we are supporting the health and wellbeing of our current and future employees

Our vision

Our vision is to equip and develop our workforce to deliver on our Luton 2040 ambition

Strategic themes

Engage listen and learn from our workforce

Workforce performance

Onboarding and talent management

Reward, recognition and benefits

Opportunity, skills and growth for all

Our foundations

Our values

Employee wellbeing

Leadership and Management

Quality and service delivery

Equality, diversity and inclusion

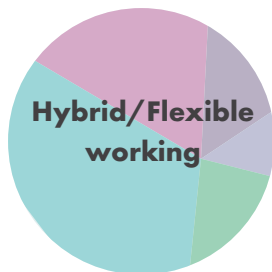
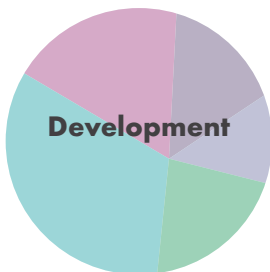
"At the heart is values-led behaviour in a culture of innovation, transformation, open conversations and continuous learning"

Providing quality job pathways for our local residents

A workforce reflective of our community whose voices are heard



Delivery is currently focusing on these key areas:



The People Strategy is delivered via People Strategy Board – its membership being made up of a range of colleagues, of all levels, services and positions of influence as managers and champions on the frontline passionate about contributing to positive change.

Wider engagement with the workforce continues to be a critical part of delivery and other key groups feed into the Board including; EDI Board, Apprenticeship Steering Group, Employee Wellness Group, and will deliver the 'people' requirements of the transformation agenda.





We have seen great progress already including:

- participation in the National Graduate Development Programme
- apprenticeships First for all vacancies and qualification requests
- launch of the Apprenticeship Levy Brokerage Service
- becoming a Cornerstone employer, developing an active work experience programme for students from Year 10 through to college/university
- introducing GIS for Care Leavers – helping to address the imbalance faced by our care experienced young people
- employees throughout the organisation are supported with a range of development opportunities, delivered in-house, increasingly through 'blended' solutions to fit with increased hybrid and flexible working
- increased mechanism for employee voice through Staff Conferences and Surveys and celebrating success and recognition through our Excellence Awards
- the launch of the Fairness Strategy and embedded the role of EDI Co-ordinators within services
- launched a Staff Diversity Network
- improved recruitment infrastructure to create a more proactive service to address talent acquisition for hard to fill vacancies
- launch of TalentLink to reduce the burden of the recruitment process for hiring managers
- a range of wellbeing initiatives that our workforce can benefit from including NHS health checks and counselling services.

TRANSFORMATION

We have a solid track record of balancing our budget and of driving innovation to reduce spend. However over the last few years, with the exception of the emergency budget which delivered £24m of savings in July 2020, we have not delivered a huge amount of savings. We do however know that there are significant opportunities for us to improve, be more efficient and manage demand in more creative ways. Therefore this year we have refreshed our approach.

Our Transformation Programme will transform our organisation, making us 'future ready'. The programme is underpinned by our 2040 ambition of creating a modern and innovative Council, providing high-quality, efficient services that meet the needs of residents and delivers on the vision for Luton with all transformation projects contributing to the 2040 priorities. We have an opportunity through this programme, not only to transform the council for the better, but to do change differently than it has been done before.

The diagram below sets out our Transformation Streams and how they contribute to our 2040 vision.



We have set out an ambitious programme and recognise that we now need a huge collaborative effort across the whole council to make the programme a success. To help us with this we have identified key leaders within the council to act as role models and agents of change across our different themes:

- commissioning and commercial
- place and partnerships
- prevention and early intervention
- resident experience.

During the discovery phase of the programme, 30 separate opportunities were identified that would help transform the authority and create a council ready for 2040.

The Council knows that any transformation of this scale must be a journey, and we won't know all of the solutions at the start of the programme. It is also not going to be feasible to deliver all 30 projects in the first year, therefore we have conducted a validation and prioritisation exercise.

The priority projects selected to be progressed to the next stage are:

1. contracts and third party spend
2. income generation and traded service
3. resident's experience
4. neighbourhood working model
5. passenger transport
6. building and technical services (DLO Strategic Review).

The identified savings and cost avoidance are very high level estimates at this stage as the level of assurance is currently quite low and a lot more work is required through the development phase to move from strategic business case to outline business case. As we move from discovery to development, the level of assurance will improve and delivery of savings will follow in 2024/25.

The 2024/25 budget report refers to the funding equalisation reserve being available to support the significant transformation programme over the next few years. The report also refers to a one-off use of prior year collection fund surplus of £3.7m subject to approval by Executive. This will enable any investment required as part of the delivery phase of the transformation programme to be funded going forward, subject to approval of final business cases by Executive including identification of estimated savings.

The delivery stage of the project started in January 2024. By end of March 2024 we will have:

- scoped opportunities for improvement in large and complex contracts including redesign of waste services, category strategy for facilities management
- developed an overall commercial strategy
- proposed recommendations for schools traded services
- scoped income generation opportunities
- developed a target operating model for working with neighbourhoods
- established steering groups for four of our prioritised projects
- explored 10-15 automated service options which will provide the greatest efficiencies.

It is important to note that these are first steps on the council's three year transformation journey, where we also transform and enable our organisation to operate very differently, we also have the challenge of closing our budget gap of circa £20 million. Within our first phase we will be looking to redress a financial pressure of circa £4 million into 24/25.

The Programme is being led by the council's Transformation Board, comprising of each of the Corporate Directors, the Council's Section 151 Officer, the Service Director for Transformation and the council's transformation partner, Human Engine.

The Transformation Programme's workstreams will sit alongside other 'non-transformational change' happening across the council, and IT's pivotal transformation programme which is insourcing operational arrangements from our IT provider, Civica.

ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

In order to manage performance, we have a set of KPIs that we monitor through a quarterly Corporate Performance Report and an annual Luton 2040 Progress Report. These KPI's are being refreshed to ensure they are in line with our 2040 target outcomes, and this has begun through our service planning process, with each service identifying the top 5 KPIs they measure within their service. Our service plan overview gives a summary of each service and the KPIs attached to them.

To support performance, services come together to discuss and refine their service plans, and report on progress. We use these times to identify challenges, problem solve and celebrate success.

Our data monitoring tools, including the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and Social Progress Index, help us to assess need and make strategic decisions.

Teams within each service develop team plans giving further detail on how they are going to deliver towards service plan priorities and individuals develop their own work plans outlining their contribution to the team. Individual staff receive regular support with their work through line management and check-in meetings.

IT

In our last peer challenge in April 2018, Information Technology was recognised as an area that required urgent attention.

Since then we have made significant investment and progress in stabilising technology in the council, moving most people away from thin clients to laptops, and improving network performance.

In common with other local authorities, the pandemic drove rapid cultural change around technology and reset the cultural boundaries around the use of technology, and it is clear that despite the improvements made to date, the expectation of colleagues across the council is now in a very different place to where it was in 2018. Technology is an increasingly vital enabler of all aspects of service delivery.

Set against this need for a more strategic approach to technology was a realisation that it was increasingly difficult to deliver our programme within the constraints of an outsourced IT operation. Therefore, when our commissioned service, Civica, approached the council about an early exit to the contract (as part of a corporate shift away from outsourcing activities to focus on application delivery) it was clear that the council had an opportunity to reset our technology delivery model.

In 2023 the technology functions were transferred to the Chief Executive department, and a new service director role was established. In August 2023 the council formally signed an exit agreement with Civica, with a target for all services to return to council control on 1st September 2024.

The council is now in a transitory stage with the immediate focus on 'lifting and shifting' the outsourced operation back into the council, with as little disruption as possible to the delivery of council services. Once this is achieved we will start to reshape the way we deliver technology to be more strategic, ensuring we have a solid and robust digital data and technology foundation to support the Luton 2040 vision.

Our work in IT is focussed on supporting the delivery of three key outcomes of Luton 2040:

Outcome 1: Maintaining a financially sustainable council

In our commitment to ensuring the financial sustainability of the council, our focus is on expanding the scope of enabling services delivered by the Information Technology team. The goal is to sustain current levels of service within the existing budget envelope while strategically bringing IT services back in-house.

The first crucial step is the formal exit from the Civica contract, marking a shift towards an in-house provision of IT services. Simultaneously, we are establishing new service management functions and deploying advanced tools to enhance our technological capabilities. This includes the recruitment and establishment of a dedicated first line team to efficiently manage and support the in-house IT services. Furthermore, there's an initiative to separate and refresh data centre infrastructure, transitioning to a hyper-converged infrastructure for greater efficiency.

While these changes are significant in reshaping our technological landscape, the focus remains on sustaining current service levels within the existing budget constraints. The success of these activities will contribute to maintaining a financially sustainable council.

Outcome 2: Designing and delivering modern, efficient, and high-quality services

Our commitment to designing and delivering modern, efficient, and high-quality services involves a strategic approach to IT management and security. This initiative aims to enhance system and data security, reduce the likelihood and impact of cyber attacks, and transform the IT operations function into a strategic and innovative technology function.

To achieve these objectives, the introduction of a security operations centre is underway, with an emphasis on completing the setup to bolster our cybersecurity measures. Additionally, there's a comprehensive plan to increase capacity in security management. Cyber awareness training for all staff is being implemented to reduce the likelihood of cyber incidents or breaches. Simultaneously, efforts are focused on transforming the operational IT operations function into a strategic Digital Data and Technology (DDAT) capability.

Outcome 3: Delivering our people strategy to recruit, develop, and enable our workforce to be the best that they can be

In our commitment to delivering a people strategy that recruits, develops, and enables our workforce to excel, a key objective is ensuring all staff are digitally connected. This initiative focuses on providing equal access to information for all staff, regardless of job function.

The primary measurement for success in this endeavour is the procurement of appropriate licences and the deployment of necessary equipment for frontline staff. This will not only enable digital connectivity but also facilitate access to corporate online services. This strategic move directly addresses information access equality, ensuring all staff have the communications they need to carry out their roles effectively.



Case Study:

Improvement to children's services



Following an Inadequate Judgement in January 2020 Ofsted ILACS (Inspection of Local Authority Children's Services) inspection, Luton Children's Services developed a comprehensive improvement plan that linked to team delivery plans. Progress on the improvement plan has been and continues to be monitored by the independently chaired Improvement Board and Children's Services Review Group, providing support, oversight, and challenge.

Ofsted returned in July 2022 to undertake another standard inspection. Ofsted's overall judgement was that Luton's Children services Requires Improvement to be Good. This meant that the formal intervention previously in place ended.

Ofsted believed that leaders and staff had achieved tangible and significant progress since the inspection in 2020, and that children and their families now received a much better service. They also evidenced that improving the quality of support for children and their families is a clear priority for elected councillors, senior leaders, and partners. They recognised that these improvements had been achieved despite the significant impact of Covid-19 and a challenging budget environment.

Ofsted also identified five areas for improvement for Luton to continue working on:

- the quality and impact of supervision and management oversight
- the stability of the workforce
- the quality and analysis of assessments of children
- the quality of evidence-based assessments undertaken to support effective placement matching
- the consistency of support and pathway plans for care leavers

To address the identified areas for improvement, a new three-year improvement plan was developed. The plan had four identified themes, led by a service director, that describe the improvement activity required to support our on-going improvement journey and to ensure the provision of good and or outstanding children's services within this timeframe.





Theme 1: Improving Quality - Ensuring the right staff are in the right place at the right time to deliver a consistent standard of good quality safeguarding services to children and families.

Theme 2: Improving Implementation of Learning - Using what we know and learn to continuously improve and enhance the services we deliver for children and families.

Theme 3: Improving Tools - Ensuring we have the right tools to enable the workforce to deliver good quality services for children and families.

Theme 4: Improving Strategic Partnerships - Effective partnership working to enable the delivery of common goals and a high-quality multi-agency response for children and families.

On the 14th and 15th June 2023 Ofsted completed a focused visit that looked at our arrangements for the 'front door'.

Ofsted noted the following:

- despite significant changes in leadership, services remain effective
- our front door service provides suitable advice, help and support in a timely manner
- our permanent workforce continues to stabilise
- Quality assurance processes have increased in their reach and effectiveness, enabling leaders to have a clear oversight of practice and need

Ofsted noted improvements to be made:

- step-up and step-down processes
- multi-agency working arrangements which ensure that all partners have a shared understanding of thresholds
- the quality and timeliness of assessments

In November 2023, we added a 5th theme to capture activity being undertaken by partners (police, health, and education) to the plan, ensuring priorities were understood and regular updates on progress captured

Theme 5: Partnership working - The bedrock to delivering high quality multi-agency support across the Luton system.

We continue to work towards our aim of delivering outstanding services for children and young people in Luton. We now have a permanent department management team and planning has begun for the implementation of the new social care reforms.

Appendix A

1 Vision 2 Vision 3 Priority 4 Strategy 5 Plan

2040 Vision Corporate Plan

Luton Strategy Matrix

<p>3 Priority</p> <p>Building inclusive sustainable economic strategy that delivers investment to support the growth of businesses, jobs and incomes.</p>	<p>Tackling the climate emergency and becoming a net zero town with sustainable growth and a healthier environment.</p>	<p>Becoming a child friendly town, where our children grow up happy, healthy and secure, with a voice that matters and the opportunities they need to thrive.</p>	<p>Improving population wellbeing and tackling inequalities to enable everyone to have a good quality of life and reach their full potential.</p>	<p>Supporting a strong and empowered community, built on fairness, local pride and a powerful voice for all our residents.</p>	<p>Creating a modern and innovative council, providing high quality, efficient services that meet the needs of residents and deliver Luton 2040</p>
<p>4 Strategy</p> <p>Inclusive and Sustainable Economy Strategy</p>	<p>Net Zero Road Map</p>	<p>Child Friendly Strategy</p> <p>Education and Learning Strategy</p>	<p>Population Well-being Strategy</p> <p>Housing Strategy Adult Social Care Strategy</p>	<p>Fairness Strategy</p>	<p>Enabling Strategies</p> <p>People Strategy Transformation Strategy Medium Term Financial Strategy Data Strategy</p>
<p>5 Plan</p> <p>Inward Investment Plan Town Centre Plan Private Sector Enforcement Strategy Green Spaces Neighbourhood Services Plan Local Transport Plan Local Plan Framework Culture Trust Employment and Skills Plan Prosperity through Procurement Anchor Framework Airport Business Plan</p>	<p>Local nature recovery Plan Healthy Estates Plan Electric Vehicle Charging Plan Waste Plan Local flood risk management Plan Corporate Energy Plan Luton Green Infrastructure Plan</p>	<p>Children's Improvement Plan Early Help Strategy Behaviour, Inclusion and Well-being Plan SEND Joint Commissioning Plan Inclusive Music Plan Care leaver ambition plan Sufficiency Plan Engagement and participation Plan SEND and Inclusion Plan NEET Plan Early Help Plan SEND and Inclusion Strategy</p>	<p>Library Strategy Homeless Reduction and rough sleeping plan Dementia and carers strategy LD Strategy Neurodiversity plan Physical Activity Plan Tenants Participation Plan Rough Sleeping Plan Customer Plan Food Plan Domestic Abuse Plan National Drugs Plan Tobacco Control Plan Child Mental Health Plan Parenting Plan Family Hub Plan Playing Pitch and Indoor Built Oral Health Plan Infant feeding Plan Health and Wellbeing Board Plan</p>	<p>Community Networks Fairness Taskforce Neighbourhood working Harnessing Momentum Arts and Culture Plan Curating Luton Heritage Plan Community Safety Plan</p>	<p>Recruitment strategy Capital Strategy Multi Agency workforce and development Member training and development plan Communications and Marketing Strategy IT Plan</p>

Operational and Service plans

LUTON 2040

Moving from vision to reality



luton.gov.uk