

Southwark Council Productivity Plan

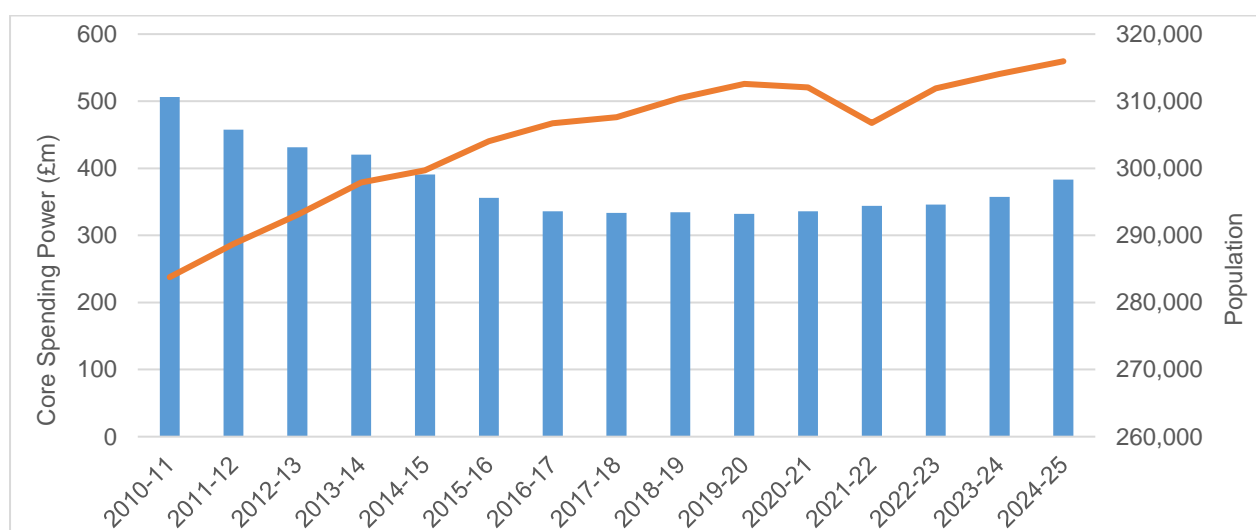
Recent economic challenges and funding cuts have meant that Southwark has had to deliver more with less and we have developed robust organisational structures that allow us to do that.

Southwark is a vibrant borough in the centre of London with numerous strengths - green spaces, diverse communities, vibrant voluntary and faith sector organisations and a huge range of world-leading institutions. However, like the rest of the country, Southwark Council has faced a number of challenges in recent years, including large scale funding cuts, increases in demand, responding to and recovering from the COVID pandemic, rising costs due to inflationary pressures and the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on our residents.

Since 2010/11, Southwark's Core Spending Power¹ has reduced by £123m in real terms. Over the same period, Southwark's population has grown by 32,000 (11%)², with an associated increase in demand for services.

This reduction in funding, coupled with an increase in demand has meant that Southwark Council has needed to make considerable efficiencies since 2010 and core spending power per capita is 32% lower than it was in 2010/11³. This difference is greater in Southwark than the average for London councils, where core spending power per capita is 28% lower.

Change to core spending power and population in Southwark since 2010 (£m, real terms 2022/23)



We have taken a proactive approach to the management of these challenges. Our strategic planning, financial management and performance reporting are aligned to ensure that we can maximise our productivity.

In our [Southwark 2030 strategy](#), we have set out a shared vision for what we want Southwark to achieve by 2030 that has been developed in collaboration with our local partners. The

¹ DLUHC, Local Government Finance Settlements - analysed by London Councils.

² ONS, Mid-Year Estimates and Sub National Population Projections – analysed by London Councils.

³ DLUHC, Local Government Finance Settlements and ONS – analysed by London Councils.

strategy is driven by Southwark’s needs, yet capitalises on our strengths, with a clear set of goals that will help to achieve it.

At the beginning of each financial year the council plans ahead over a three-year period through the [Medium Term Financial Strategy](#). This enables the council to plan investments and efficiencies in a controlled and sustainable manner and ensure a prudent level of reserves to smooth the impact of any unforeseen hurdles. Through ambitious investment in regeneration and housing, the council is benefitting from significant additional income from Council Tax and Business Rates. This enables the council to spend more on residents and reduces the need for savings. The [Council Delivery Plan](#) sets out how we will deliver our vision within our budgetary framework and will be updated to align with Southwark 2030.

We are also undertaking a programme of internal change, called Future Southwark, which will ensure the organisation is set up to deliver the Southwark 2030 vision. We have undertaken a redesign of our business resources to further increase productivity by optimising use of our resources, streamlining process, and ensuring that we have the workforce skills and teams to deliver our vision. Through this redesign process we will be improving our capabilities and corporate capacity to offer support to services across the council that may need it, e.g. supporting the housing improvement plan and supporting the improvement of council wide responsiveness and customer care and improving resident satisfaction.

As well as this, we are delivering recommendations made by the Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge review (October 2023) to better align our corporate structures and governance. This will support improved productivity across the council by driving culture change and empowering our people to work more effectively to improve resident outcomes.

Council performance is monitored via quarterly reporting to the Corporate Management Team and covers finance and resources, council transformation priorities, statutory performance and deliverables set out in the Council Delivery Plan. In addition, financial performance is reported through an annual performance report (see our [Annual Governance Statement](#) and [Statement of Accounts](#)).

These organisational structures enable us to make efficiencies while also continuing to be ambitious about the delivery of local priorities.

Despite funding challenges, we have much to be proud of. Southwark has continued to deliver positive outcomes against a balanced revenue outturn.

Our goals	Our recent achievements
People live in safe, well-maintained homes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Just over 460 council homes were completed this year, adding to the over 3,000 we have now completed or are on site building. • 100% of rough sleepers receive support within 48hrs of a referral. • The proportion of private rented households that are covered by property licensing schemes increased to 28%. • Over 100 extra care housing units created.

Our goals	Our recent achievements
<p>Children and young people have a great start in life</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 96% of schools in Southwark are rated as good or outstanding by Ofsted, maintaining high standards across the borough (98% of schools were rated as good or outstanding in the 2022/23 academic year). • 81% of our children in care live close to the borough, helping them maintain important links with their families and support systems. • Delivered mental health support for children and young people in schools and through the Nest walk-in service (373 children were supported in 2022/23, with 85% of schools taking up the service and 100% of Nest service users reporting a positive outcome). • Launched the cost-of-living package for residents in 2022 and distributed support worth over £40m to more than 100,000 local people including free school meals for more than 15,000 children every day of every school holiday period.
<p>Crime is low and people feel safe</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since 2022/23, increased the number of CCTV operators by 20% and invested £5m in more community wardens and upgrades to CCTV. • Over 100 police officers trained by young people on Stop & Search. • Since 2022, upgraded 5,845 street and estate lights upgraded to LED
<p>We all benefit from Southwark's economic strength and growth</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since 2022 created 1,900 green jobs in Southwark, with 660 being created in 23/24 alone. • Since 2022 created 1,276 apprenticeships and supported over 13,800 residents into training to improve their skills for work. • Launched a new employer engagement and job brokerage service.
<p>People across our whole community can have good health and wellbeing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our residents are living longer lives than ever before, with life expectancy comparable or better than the national average. • Levels of relative deprivation in the borough continue to reduce. • Child vaccination rates are comparable to or better than the London average. • Preventable mortality has reduced by over one-third since 2001, narrowing the gap with England. • Delivered an integrated reablement team that visited people in their homes and, since 2023, supports a unit in a care home, which has led to over 80% of people who stay in the unit returning home with reduced or no ongoing care, supporting better outcomes and reduced costs.

Our goals	Our recent achievements
Our environment is clean, green and healthy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over 10,000 trees planted since 2022. • Improvements made to Cossal Park, Pelier Park and Burgess Park (such as two new full-sized 4G all-weather pitches built using recycled materials); and 19 council-managed tennis courts refurbished. • Work to end carbon emissions in council operations and vehicles and the pension fund continued (since September 2017, the fund has reduced its weighted carbon intensity by ~73.5%⁴). • Increased the number of parking spaces in bike hangars by over 600.

However, challenges remain, and we would welcome additional government support to deliver our ambitions for decent and affordable homes for all.

Southwark Council is building one of the largest number of new council homes in the country and since 2015 has delivered one of the highest numbers of new social rent homes in the country.⁵ In addition, data from the London Assembly Housing Committee (published November 2023), shows Southwark in the top five London boroughs for affordable housing delivery (starts and completions) from 2015/16 to 2022/23⁶.

Our ambition is to create a future where everyone has a decent, affordable, safe and well-maintained home. This is why we are committed to continue our ambitious programme to build, enable and unlock new and old housing to make buying or renting more affordable; to improve standards and maintenance of council, social and private rented homes; and reduce the number of people who are homeless or live in overcrowded conditions.

We are driving performance improvement and resident satisfaction with the Housing Service. Over the next two years, the Housing Transformation Programme will, through a range of improvement activity, provide a unified council approach to focus on need, fixing the basics and providing an excellent customer service.

However, to deliver on our ambitions will also require support from the government to address the broken council financing system that holds back our efficiency. In collaboration with 20 of England’s largest council landlords, we have set out five recommendations for the government to [secure the future of England’s council housing](#).

1. Establish a new fair and sustainable HRA model: including an urgent £644 million one-off rescue injection, and long-term, certain rent and debt agreements.
2. Reform unsustainable Right to Buy policies: by reducing discount levels and eligibility, as well as protecting newly built council homes from sale.

⁴ [Report Carbon Footprint Update - 31 December 2023.pdf \(southwark.gov.uk\)](#)

⁵ One in three new council homes started in the last government reported year 2021/22 in England were in Southwark (726 out of 2,234). We, therefore, started by far the largest number of new council homes in London and the country in that year. This was more than double the number of any other council that year. See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-affordable-housing-supply>

⁶ [GLA Annual Affordable Housing Monitor up to March 2023 by the London Assembly Housing Committee](#)

3. Remove red tape on existing funding: so that it is streamlined, reflects cost inflation, and can be used flexibly to meet local need.
4. Announce a Green & Decent Homes Programme: to bring all council housing up to the new standard of safety, decency and energy efficiency by 2030.
5. Take urgent action to restart stalled building projects, avoiding the loss of construction sector capacity and a market downturn.

We are continuing to develop strategies that will support our productivity and improve the outcomes that we deliver for our communities

We know that there is further to go. We recognise that we will need to continue to do more with less so that we can continue to meet the rising demand for our services, keep pace with technological changes and deliver the ambitious vision that our residents and partners have set for Southwark.

Partnership working. The shared vision set out in Southwark 2030 will ensure that we can strengthen the collective impact of our work and that of our local partners by working together to deliver shared goals. In addition to working with our local partners, we also work closely with other councils, including through our membership of London Councils and Central London Forward, to drive our goals at a regional and sub-regional level. As well as this, we continue to work with our residents, community organisations, businesses and institutions to ensure the council's vision is a shared one.

Focusing on prevention. We are focusing on preventative approaches to help minimise costs and improve outcomes. We have already seen through our family support services the impact this approach can have in supporting better outcomes. Southwark has proudly protected our offer of community based early help and preventative services, with a greater number of retained Children's Centres in the borough than almost all authorities nationally. Through our continued commitment to invest in early intervention, we have been able to build a local multi-disciplinary offer situated within the heart of our communities. For example, we are investing in capacity to drive up the rate of families accessing early help services, in particular from seldom seen groups. As a result of our effective early help offer, we have seen the number of children in our care fall by nearly 15% in the last 2 years. We are building on this success with a renewed focus on prevention in Southwark 2030.

Utilising digital technology and data. We are taking advantage of technology and data to make better use of resources and improve decision-making. Our [Digital Strategy](#) sets out how we will utilise technology, AI and innovation to make better use of data to improve performance. For example, we are exploring how RPA can help to automate high volume, rule-based tasks currently undertaken manually. RPA uses user interfaces to access systems to enter and extract data. We have an automation up and running to help with invoice processing and entry onto our finance system and are working on one that will enter Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub referrals into our case management system. We are working to build in-house capability so that we can develop more of these at a lower cost. This technology has proven successful elsewhere and has huge potential for the council.

Supporting more equitable outcomes. We know that we will see greatest productivity when everyone is able to fulfil their full potential – regardless of their characteristics or background. Our work has been informed by the findings and recommendations of a 360-degree Equality Audit that provided an independent review of our equalities practice and delivery and a critical and thorough evaluation of the progress that has already been made, and where further improvement is required. The Southwark Stands Together programme is delivering our anti-racism work, ensuring that we improve access to our services and deliver equitable outcomes for all, e.g., by reducing school exclusions and youth offending, reducing health inequalities and building trust and confidence in the Police. We have also developed an Ethnicity Pay Gap strategy and action plan to aid our understanding of the reasons for our ethnicity pay gap and build an evidenced-based strategy for closing our ethnicity pay gap. To address the factors behind the council's ethnicity pay gap and ensure we continue to close it, we have committed to organisational system changes and behavioural changes. These measures are being implemented as part of our Southwark Stands Together workforce programme. As well as this, we are delivering learning and development to increase EDI knowledge of our staff and support them to understand how they contribute to the delivery of the Public Sector Equality Duty.