

**WINSFORD TOWN COUNCIL
STAFFING AND ASSETS COMMITTEE – 8th SEPTEMBER 2026**

Developing an approach to resource allocation and work prioritisation via the use of data and Artificial Intelligence (AI)

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To consider the adoption of a data-led approach to resource allocation, service delivery and work prioritisation across Winsford Town Council, making better use of operational data, performance information and artificial intelligence (AI) to improve efficiency, transparency and outcomes for residents.

BACKGROUND

There are opportunities to make use of data analysis to identify opportunities, improve decision-making and maximise performance while operating within limited budgets.

Rather than relying solely on tradition, assumptions or anecdotal evidence, decisions are informed by measurable outcomes and objective performance indicators.

As a local council operating within finite financial and staffing resources, Winsford Town Council faces increasing pressures including:

- Expanding service responsibilities.
- Growing community expectations.
- More complex asset portfolios.
- Recruitment and retention challenges.
- The need to demonstrate value for money.
- Increasing demands for evidence-based decision making.

The Council already collects significant amounts of information relating to its operations. This includes work programmes, maintenance schedules, inspections, project plans, budgets, waiting lists and customer enquiries.

For example, the Council maintains detailed grounds maintenance work programmes and project action plans which provide a valuable starting point for performance measurement and resource analysis.

The challenge is not collecting information but converting that information into actionable intelligence.

WHAT A DATA-LED APPROACH WOULD LOOK LIKE

This approach does not replace professional judgement, but it is about supporting decision making with reliable data.

The Council would seek to answer questions such as:

Staffing

- Which activities consume the most staff time?
- Which tasks provide the greatest community benefit?

- Are resources aligned with strategic priorities?
- Are staff spending excessive time on low-value activities?
- Can repetitive administrative tasks be automated?

Grounds Maintenance

- Which sites require the greatest intervention?
- How often are facilities used?
- What is the cost per hectare of maintaining different sites?
- Which assets generate the highest maintenance costs?
- Where is preventative maintenance more cost effective than reactive repairs?

Projects

- Which projects deliver the greatest community impact?
- Which projects demand the greatest officer resource?
- What is the return on investment from grant-funded activity?
- Which projects could be delayed without significant impact?

Asset Management

- Which assets are most utilised?
- Which assets create the highest lifecycle costs?
- Which facilities generate the most public value?
- What maintenance interventions reduce long-term expenditure?

THE ROLE OF DATA

The foundation of this approach is high-quality data. The Council already possesses a number of valuable datasets including:

- Grounds maintenance work schedules.
- Asset inspection records.
- Budget monitoring information.
- Project plans.
- Contractor costs.
- Facility booking information.
- Allotment waiting list information.
- Customer enquiries and complaints.
- Attendance and usage statistics.
- Grant funding data.

Much of this information currently exists in separate spreadsheets, reports and systems.

A key objective would be to consolidate this information into simple management dashboards that enable officers and Members to understand performance at a glance.

Examples could include:

Measure	Example
Cost per park maintained	£ per hectare
Playground maintenance costs	Annual spend

Staff time allocation	% by activity
Project progress	RAG status
Asset condition	Condition score
Customer demand	Requests by service area
Waiting lists	Demand trends
Budget utilisation	Actual v Budget

THE ROLE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Artificial Intelligence is increasingly being adopted across the public sector to support decision making and improve productivity. Recent UK Government guidance encourages public authorities to explore AI safely and responsibly while maintaining appropriate governance and oversight. Importantly, AI should be viewed as a decision-support tool rather than a decision-maker.

Potential applications include:

Administrative Automation

AI can assist with:

- Draft report preparation.
- Meeting summaries.
- Policy drafting.
- Data extraction.
- Action tracking.
- Correspondence preparation.

This has the potential to reduce administrative burdens and release officer capacity for higher-value activities.

Predictive Maintenance

AI-driven analysis could help identify:

- Assets most likely to fail.
- Facilities requiring intervention.
- Seasonal patterns in maintenance requirements.
- Future budget pressures.

Research demonstrates that predictive allocation models can improve resource utilisation and service efficiency by anticipating future demands rather than responding reactively.

Work Prioritisation

AI tools could assess:

- Strategic importance.
- Legal requirements.
- Community impact.
- Financial implications.
- Resource requirements.

This would enable projects and tasks to be ranked consistently according to agreed criteria.

Performance Analysis

AI can identify:

- Trends.
- Anomalies.
- Bottlenecks.
- Opportunities for efficiency.
- Areas of underperformance.

These insights can support more informed managerial decision making.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS

Adopting this approach could provide several benefits.

Improved Productivity

Staff effort can be directed to activities that deliver the greatest outcomes.

Better Financial Management

Resources can be allocated using objective evidence rather than assumptions.

Enhanced Transparency

Members would have access to clear performance information when making decisions.

Stronger Business Cases

Project proposals could be supported by robust data and measurable outcomes.

Better Asset Management

The Council would gain improved understanding of asset performance and lifecycle costs.

Improved Service Delivery

Resources could be aligned with changing community needs and service demands.

Greater Organisational Resilience

Knowledge becomes embedded within systems and datasets rather than residing solely with individual employees.

RISKS AND CHALLENGES

Whilst there are significant opportunities, Members should also recognise potential risks.

Data Quality

Poor data can result in poor decisions.

Technology Costs

Some investment may be required in software, dashboards and training.

Cultural Change

Moving towards evidence-based decision making may require changes to established ways of working.

Information Governance

Data protection and cybersecurity requirements must be maintained.

Over-Reliance on Technology

Human judgement, local knowledge and Member decision-making must remain central.

AI should support decision makers, not replace them.

PROPOSED PHASED IMPLEMENTATION**Phase 1 - Baseline Assessment**

- Identify existing datasets.
- Map staff activity.
- Review current reporting arrangements.
- Identify key performance measures.

Phase 2 - Dashboard Development

- Create management dashboards.
- Establish performance indicators.
- Develop asset management metrics.
- Produce regular management reporting.

Phase 3 - AI Pilot

- Introduce AI-assisted reporting.
- Pilot predictive maintenance analysis.
- Test project prioritisation tools.
- Develop automated workflows.

Phase 4 - Organisation-Wide Rollout

- Integrate systems and reporting.
- Embed performance management culture.
- Expand AI assistance across service areas.
- Support evidence-based budget setting.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Initial implementation could be delivered using existing Microsoft 365 capabilities, including Power BI, Excel analytics and Microsoft Copilot tools. More advanced solutions may require future investment, which would be reported separately to Members.

Potential savings would arise through:

- Reduced administrative time.
- Improved resource allocation.
- Better project prioritisation.

- Reduced reactive maintenance.
- More effective asset management.

CONCLUSION

Winsford Town Council has developed significantly over recent years, taking on additional assets, services and projects. With growing demands on staff and financial resources, there is a strong case for moving towards a more evidence-led method of managing those resources. This approach would allow the Council to use data, performance information and artificial intelligence to ensure that limited resources are directed towards activities delivering the greatest community benefit. By combining professional expertise with objective analysis, the Council can strengthen decision making, improve efficiency and continue to provide high-quality services for residents while achieving best value. The Committee is therefore invited to support the development of a data-led resource allocation framework and a pilot implementation programme for consideration during 2027.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are recommended to:

1. Note the contents of this report.
2. Support the development of a data-led/AI approach to resource allocation and work prioritisation across the Council.
3. Request the Town Clerk to develop an implementation plan for consideration by the Committee.
4. Establish a pilot programme focused on Grounds Maintenance and Asset Management functions during 2027.
5. Consider appropriate budget provision for software, training and data management requirements.