



Working together to build a better Newport

We have helped
Newport City Council to:

- Build a clearer, shared understanding of its entire portfolio
- Collectively agree on the implications of tough trade-offs
- Replace a 'salami slicing' approach to cost savings with a value based approach

Background

Newport City Council (NCC) is responsible for the administration of all areas of local government and the delivery of all local government services to Newport's 149,000 residents. Like all local councils, Newport continues to face significant financial challenges which means budgets are being cut. Despite the challenges the council is committed to building a fairer society and continuing to protect the most vulnerable people.

The Challenge

Over a number of years, Newport City Council has been working with significantly reduced budgets – between 2012 and 2017 there were savings of £48m. In order to meet future spending limits NCC is required to make additional savings totalling £5.7m in 2017/18 and a further £22m by 2020/21.

Despite these funding constraints the NCC Cabinet, led by Councillor Debbie Wilcox, remains committed to delivering an ambitious corporate plan, meeting its manifesto commitments and fulfilling the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015. The Cabinet members, supported by Chief Executive Will Godfrey and the permanent Officers, recognised that a 'salami slicing' approach to cost saving was not the right way forward since it would impact the quality of Newport's most important services. What was needed was a better way to establish where the council's finite resources would achieve the most value.

“The Catalyze prioritisation approach provided a key input into the budget process, ensuring Cabinet members and Officers developed a clear and shared understanding of the trade-offs required to meet the financial challenge whilst protecting our most impactful services.”

Will Godfrey,
Chief Executive
Newport City Council

How Catalyze helped

Catalyze was engaged to run an activity prioritisation process, applying decision science techniques to address the difficult trade-offs facing the council. Drawing on the collective knowledge, expertise and experience of the NCC Cabinet and Officers, the process helped them to build a deeper understanding of the choices available and how to make the best possible use of resources.

Officers were challenged to put as much ‘on the table’ for evaluation as possible, even those activities they considered non-discretionary. Challenging current thinking creates new perspectives and can lead to innovative solutions, which are still fully compliant with statutory obligations. Catalyze used this information to build a prioritisation model in preparation for an Evaluation Conference.

The leader of the council chaired the Evaluation Conference, which was facilitated by Catalyze. The members discussed and debated all service activities in detail, following a methodical structured process, with Officers providing detailed supporting insight and evidence. The process ensured the activities were reviewed and evaluated in a transparent and consistent way. The prioritisation model captured the Cabinet’s collective judgements of what matters most to the people of Newport, providing a clear audit trail.

The process enabled the members to collaboratively build an evidence base and a shared understanding to inform decision making. Recognising that everything the council delivers is important, the analysis has helped to identify those activities that must be protected above all others and the places where tough budget decisions can be taken.

Enabling Effective Decisions

By working collaboratively and using a structured activity prioritisation process, Newport City Council have successfully:

- Built a collective understanding of the entire council portfolio
- Developed a clearer shared picture of the trade-offs required to meet the financial challenges
- Ensured the most impactful activities are recognised and can be protected
- Challenged the salami slicing approach to cost saving and replaced it with a value based approach
- Established a reusable prioritisation model which can evolve and develop as circumstances change
- Reaffirmed the corporate plan and the administrations’ manifesto commitments.

info@catalyzeconsulting.com
+44 (0) 1962 775 923

www.catalyzeconsulting.com

Catalyze is a strategy consultancy, helping clients to prioritise and make robust sustainable decisions. We believe the best results are delivered through effective decision-making that engages people and aligns organisations. We have an established track record of enabling our clients to achieve results, whether it’s improved shareholder value, a better planet or both.

Catalyze was founded in 2001 in conjunction with the London School of Economics and Political Science, applying techniques built on robust and validated decision theory. We support global clients from offices in the UK, USA, Australia and New Zealand.