



POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 20 March 2024

REPORT TITLE:	COUNCIL CHANGE PROGRAMME
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

REPORT SUMMARY

The Change Programme is the Council's vehicle for developing and implementing the required projects that support the delivery of the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP). The Change Programme has been reviewed and refreshed to ensure it directly supports the refreshed Medium-Term Financial Strategy and Plan (approved by Council in February) and the implementation of the new Council Plan (approved by Council in December 2023).

The re-set of the Council's Change Programme ensures there is a single, organisational approach to transforming the business that is effectively resourced, controlled and monitored to deliver the Council's strategic priorities and outcomes, as defined in the Council Plan and the required efficiencies as set out in the MTFP.

The report provides an update on progress since the Change Programme was last reported to Policy and Resources Committee in December 2021. The report goes on to provide an overview of the refreshed Change Programme and the rationale for the various elements within it.

The Change Programme supports all themes within the Council Plan: Wirral Working Together 2023 – 27.

RECOMMENDATION/S

The Policy and Resources Committee is requested to:

1. Confirm support for the Council's Change Programme as presented in this report.
2. Confirm support for the Elected Member oversight arrangements for the programme as set out in paragraph 8.1.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1.1 The Change Programme has been reviewed and reset to ensure the Council has the right portfolio of programmes and projects that optimise the Council's operating model to support the implementation of the Council Plan and achievement of required efficiencies as set out in the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP). The report also proposes how Members of the Policy and Resource Committee will continue to maintain oversight of the Change Programme to maintain accountability for delivery.

2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 The Change Programme provides a framework to deliver organisational change that supports the delivery of the Council Plan and MTFP. The scope of Council activity and scale of financial challenges over the life of the MTFP requires a structured and controlled programme management approach. All change projects will be supported by clear business cases setting out the costs and benefits of the changes being proposed.
- 2.2 Doing nothing is not considered a valid option as it would result in an unacceptable level of risk in achieving the outcomes of the Council Plan and/or the required efficiencies in the MTFP. This would likely have a negative impact on the Council achieving its strategic priorities and balancing the budget.
- 2.3 The Change Programme provides a single, coordinated and Council-wide approach to delivering business change. An un-coordinated approach to delivering cross cutting business change would create risks in relation to available capacity and resources leading to a higher likelihood on non-delivery.

3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Background

- 3.1 The Council's Change Programme was last reviewed and reported to this committee in Autumn 2021. This was at the same time as the publication of the External Assurance Review commissioned by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) in response to the Council's request for exceptional financial support in 2020/21 and 2021/22. The Change Programme reported at that time reflected the recommendations of the External Assurance Review and was a key part of the Council's evidence of having a plan to deliver a programme of change to support the Council's financial stability.
- 3.2 Since Autumn 2021, the Council's primary focus has been on delivering the Improvement Plan (agreed by Council on 11 July 2022) with particular focus on improvements to governance and financial stability. The progress the Council has made in this regard has been overseen by the Independent Assurance Panel Chaired by Carolyn Downs. The Panel has acted as a critical friend, providing scrutiny and oversight as well as specialist advice and guidance. The Panel has

noted the Council's progress in that time period and has signified its intention to step down at the end of the financial year subject to the agreement of the 2024/25 budget and refreshed Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

- 3.3 A summary of the progress against the Improvement Plan was reported to this committee in November 2023 as part of the transition to and adoption of the new Council Plan. For reference, this is included again as Appendix 1. In addition to that report, a number of business change projects have been completed in the intervening period since the last Change Programme was last reported. A summary of projects completed is set out in Appendix 2 attached to this report.

Refreshed Change Programme

- 3.4 The current reset of the Change Programme commenced in Autumn 2023 alongside the development of the Council Plan and the emerging refresh of the MTFP as part of the 2024/25 budget process. As a large organisation responsible for the delivery of a wide range of services, there is a need for a single, coherent and organisation-wide approach to business change. This approach seeks to ensure:

- Clear focus on achieving the Council's strategic priorities,
- Effective programme governance and control,
- Clarity of roles and responsibilities,
- Appropriate resourcing and investment,
- Comprehensive business cases that evidence a clear case for change,
- Delivery of capabilities to transform services and the organisation,
- Effective monitoring and achievement of programme and project benefits.

- 3.5 The Change programme has been designed to directly respond to the Council's key strategic priorities specifically:

- To support achievement of the outcomes of the Council Plan,
- To secure the Council's financial stability in response to external financial pressures,
- To transform the Council's digital, data and information technology capability to modernise and streamline business processes to ensure investment in frontline services can be maximised,
- To streamline back office and enabling functions to ensure they are as efficient and effective as possible,
- To rationalise the Council's estate of property and assets to ensure it represents value for money,
- To manage increasing demand for statutory services (particularly Children's and Adult social care),
- To transform the leisure and cultural services offer,
- To ensure value for money for universal services including waste and street cleaning services.

- 3.6 As at February 2024, the Council's Strategic Change Programme is made up of:

- 9 defined programmes (one of which is a health and care partnership-led programme)

- 40 projects (with additional projects currently in scoping phase).

3.7 A summary of the nine separate programmes that make up the Strategic Change Programme is set out below. A more detail description of these programmes and their related projects is included as Appendix 2.

Figure 1: Strategic Change Programme



3.8 The refreshed Change Programme seeks to consolidate the Council's organisation-wide transformation agenda to achieve the most efficient and effective operating model. The Council Plan includes a set of guiding principles that shape how we will develop the Council as an organisation to best implement the plan. These principles are set out below:

- **Joined up design** – ensuring our services are accessible, person-centric and joined-up.
- **No one left behind** – Inclusive services which recognise the different needs of residents, families and communities.
- **Prevention** – Working to address the causes of inequalities and demand on Council services and ensuring we provide the right support at the right time.
- **Regeneration** – Investing in infrastructure and supporting businesses to provide a thriving local economy and opportunities for all.

- **Independence** – Enabling individuals, families and communities to help themselves and each other.
- **Relationships** – Working with residents, partners, businesses and communities for a better Wirral.

3.9 The Change Programme aims to deliver a Council that is in the strongest possible position to meet the ambitions of the Council Plan, by focussing effort on resident outcomes, delivering identified savings and contributing to long term financial sustainability.

Programme Governance

3.10 The Director of Finance / Section 151 Officer is the Senior Responsible Officer for the Change Programme. The Director of Finance chairs a monthly Investment & Change Board (ICB) that reviews programme delivery, all new business case proposals, project initiations, change requests and project closure reports prior to transfer into business as usual. The ICB includes all Council Directors and other key officers. The ICB oversees all transformational activity across the Council and acts as a 'design authority' to ensure that there is a single and joined up approach to business change and transformation.

3.11 The Corporate Programme Management Office (PMO) ensures the Council follows good practice in programme and project management methodology, lifecycle and tools. The function promotes good practice across the organisation and consistency of reporting and programme and project assurance. This includes:

- An identified Senior Responsible Owner for each programme and project (for programmes this is usually a member of SLT),
- Identified programme / project manager,
- Approved business case/mandate,
- Programme/Project board,
- Defined programme/project lifecycle,
- Clear project plan and Risk, Assumptions, Issues and Dependencies (RAID) logs,
- Highlight reporting,
- Defined benefits and plans to realise them.

3.12 As part of the Change Programme reset, a health check has been conducted across all programmes and projects in delivery to review any gaps in the above and ensure these have been addressed and there is consistency in delivery arrangements.

Benefit Realisation

3.13 Benefit realisation seeks to ensure there is effective return on investment for all programme and project business cases. Benefits are defined in both financial and non-financial terms and will be delivered to a clear plan and timetable. The Change Programme is key to supporting the achievement of the outcomes in the Council Plan and specific programmes have been aligned to the respective themes of that

plan. However, the Change Programme is also fundamental to the Council effectively achieving the savings targets set out in the MTFP.

- 3.14 The Change Programme re-set includes a detailed review of all programme and project benefits to ensure these are well-defined, with clear owners and plans for their achievement. These will be aligned to an updated Benefit Management Framework which will ensure all business cases define benefits clearly and realistically with clear plans in place for their realisation. Benefits will be tracked and monitored as part of the programme/project lifecycle to ensure alignment to the MTFP.
- 3.20 The timeline for finalising the Benefit Management Framework is set out below:
- Draft Benefit Management Framework – April 2024
 - Training, Testing and Feedback of Benefits Approach – May 2024
 - Implementation of Benefit Realisation Plans across all Change Programmes – July/August 2024
 - Implementation of dashboards to provide ongoing monitoring for benefit realisation – Sept 2024

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Council Change Programme has been designed to include a portfolio of programmes and projects that will contribute to the realisation of the required efficiencies as set out in Medium Term Financial Plan.
- 4.2 The Change Programme will be reviewed annually alongside the refresh of the MTFS and MTFP to ensure continued alignment and any changes to savings targets and programme scope can be made.

5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no legal implications arising as a result of this report. Any legal implications related to service changes, new operating models or implications affecting statutory service delivery will be managed through the respective programmes set out above.

6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: STAFFING, ICT AND ASSETS

- 6.1 The Council has an internal change capability and capacity which includes: Corporate PMO, Business Change and Programme Management, Organisational Design and Development teams. Professional programme management will be critical to ensuring the interdependencies between programmes and business as usual operations are effectively managed. External capability and capacity may also be required from time to time where there is a need for specialist technical input or a requirement to accelerate the programme. An example of this is the work to appoint a specialist digital partner to accelerate the Council's digital capability and transformation.

6.2 The Change Programme is resourced through a mix of core revenue resources combined with the use of capital resources where these can be deployed. The funding mix across programmes and projects is determined by the business case in advance of programmes and projects being approved and initiated. Capital is used for projects where they are capital-led and project costs can be capitalised such as projects within the Digital Programme. The guidance around the flexible use of capital receipts to support transformational activity is also used to fund programme/project activity where this can be supported. In some instances, external grant funding is used to fund project activity when this is successfully bid for and secured.

7.0 RELEVANT RISKS

7.1 The Change Programme has been refreshed and reset to mitigate the corporate risk of the Council not delivering on its Medium-Term Financial Plan.

7.2 In line with good practice, all programmes and projects will have risk management arrangements that will be overseen by Programme and Project Managers as part of their day-to-day duties.

7.3 The main programme risks are summarised in the table below:

Risk	Mitigation
A lack of clear strategic direction to inform the Change Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Plan • Medium Term Financial Plan • Investment & Change Board (ICB) • Identified SRO
Lack of clarity around priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council Plan • Prioritisation process • Programme definition & planning
Capacity & capability to deliver at pace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICB and programme governance • External support procured as required
Organisation change readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People strategy • Organisational development & engagement

8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION

8.1 It is proposed that the on-going Elected Member oversight of the Change Programme is conducted through the Policy and Resources Committee Finance Sub-Committee. The Director of Finance will bring forward regular reports on progress throughout the year as part of the forward plan for that Committee with relevant Senior Responsible Owners for Programmes presenting programme updates.

8.2 For any business change projects that have a direct impact on staff, the Council is required to consult with the Trade Unions and affected staff on proposed changes to

roles, responsibilities, structures, and services. This engagement will be timetabled as appropriate as part of project implementation.

- 8.3 Where there are proposed changes to services as a result of programme or project implementation, any required service-user consultation will also be timetabled as part of project implementation.

9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no direct Equality Implications arising as a result of this report. Individual programmes or projects will be subject to an equality impact assessment as part of their business case development or initiation.

10.0 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There are no direct Environment and Climate Implications arising as a result of this report. Individual programmes or projects will determine any environmental benefits as part of their business case development or initiation.

11.0 COMMUNITY WEALTH IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 There are no direct Community Wealth Implications arising as a result of this report. Individual programmes or projects will determine any community wealth benefits as part of their business case development or initiation.

REPORT AUTHOR: Mike Callon
(Head of Corporate Office)
telephone: 07887 633110
email: michaelcallon@wirral.gov.uk

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Improvement Plan Progress Report.
Appendix 2 – Summary of Project Closures in 2022 and 2023.
Appendix 3 – Change Programme Overview March 2024.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Council Plan: Wirral Working Together 2023 – 27
Medium Term Financial Strategy
Independent Assurance Panel Reports
Council Improvement Plan

Terms of Reference

This report is being considered by the Policy & Resources Committee in accordance with section (a) of its Terms of Reference, “formulate, co-ordinate and implement corporate policies and strategies”

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
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Policy & Resources Committee

1 December 2021