

**Meeting** Executive  
**Portfolio Area** Resources, Transformation & ICT  
**Date** 12 October 2022



## FUTURE COUNCIL 2025 TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME UPDATE

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### KEY DECISION

#### 1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The report sets out an update on the Future Council 2025 transformation programme, including proposals for the Council to implement a Five-Star Customer Service programme which responds to the key principles agreed by Executive in August 2021.
- 1.2 The report covers an update on the first phase of implementation and outlines the proposed programme, its goals and benefits for the next phase to be delivered in 2023/24.

#### 2 RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Executive:

- 2.1 Agrees the Five-Star Customer Service programme outlined in 4.2.
- 2.2 Note the progress on the first phase of implementation of the transformation programme.

- 2.3 Note that further work to develop detailed plans, including structural change, is ongoing and will be taken forward over the autumn of 2022.
- 2.4 Endorse the proposal for resident feedback and engagement outlined in section 4.28.

### **3 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 In August 2021, Executive approved the development of a transformation programme to improve customer experience, increase workforce productivity and organisational resilience, while supporting savings required by the Medium Term Financial Strategy. There are two main drivers for the Transformation programme; improving resident / customer satisfaction as well as supporting the Council's Making Your Money Count agenda.
- 3.2 Across the country, local government has been facing a challenging financial position after a decade of central government funding reductions and with pressures heightened by the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, increasing inflationary pressures and the cost-of-living crisis driving up demand for services. Therefore, the focus on financial security is more important than ever to support a strong position for the Town and the Council.
- 3.3 The ability to identify options to reduce net spend has become ever more challenging, with a need to make annual savings to reduce the Council's cost base. The transformation programme combines changes to processes, organisation structure, culture and technology; all four of these aspects need to be reviewed and redesigned, with changes implemented to each, to ensure improvements are sustainable and maintain delivery of priority services within a lower overall budget.
- 3.4 Through delivering sustainable transformation, the programme aims to enable resources to continue to support the delivery of the priorities set out in the Council's corporate plan. The Corporate plan includes a number of priority programmes including Clean, Green, Safe and Thriving town, Transforming our Town, Co-operative Neighbourhoods, and More Social and Affordable Homes.

#### **Improving resident and customer satisfaction with services**

- 3.5 Customers increasingly want convenient services, with access when, how and where they choose. For many this means online services which are easy to use and available "24/7".
- 3.6 The Council has invested in new tools and technology over the past few years. In particular,
- the implementation of a new website has improved the user experience (for example, it is now much easier to view on a mobile device and web content has been simplified and upgraded).
  - Implementation of a digital platform (self-serve forms and customer case management), this has enabled many more services to be requested online.

- Integration of the web platforms with the Council's new waste management system has enabled self-service and automation of some of the highest volume requests (e.g. missed bins), improving the experience as well as supporting efficiency savings in customer support teams.
  - A housing online portal has been implemented offering tenants the ability to view balances and request services, such as repairs online.
- 3.7 In addition to technology, the Council has invested in leadership capacity as well as technical and project management skills to further develop the programme. A core Digital and Transformation team is in place and further work is ongoing to recruit additional capacity.
- 3.8 While there has been an increase in the number of digital transactions (from 13% of all transactions, to approximately 24% over the past 18 months<sup>\*1</sup>) there is opportunity to further improve our online offer and the ease with which residents can access Council services.
- 3.9 Significant work is underway to improve customer service performance, through accelerating the work to enable particular transactions to be completed online, temporarily increasing the size of the customer service team by 5Fte to help address higher volumes, working to overcome recruitment pressures, and promoting the use of online channels. In addition, work is underway to address service backlogs such as the fencing implementation programme being led by the Housing and Investment team. Taken together, this plan aims to improve call handling performance, encourage use of online channels, and address some of the covid-related service backlogs. However, while short term measures including recruiting and training additional staff are being implemented, there is a need to identify long term financially sustainable solutions.
- 3.10 To help inform the next phase of the programme, a range of sources of feedback have been sought from staff, customers (for example through complaints) and Members. This highlights some areas where there is a need to adapt how we operate to meet expectations in terms of the quality of service provided. At the same time, satisfaction with the service offered by the customer service centre has remained broadly high based on our telephone survey results (consistently 85%- 90% reporting they were satisfied over the past 18 months), but as set out below, there are some areas of improvement that the transformation programme will focus on.
- 3.11 Review of cases and staff / member feedback identified some of the common complaints raised by customers:
- When will my issue be resolved and what are the next steps?
  - How can I find out what is going on with my case?
  - Why did the council say no to my request?

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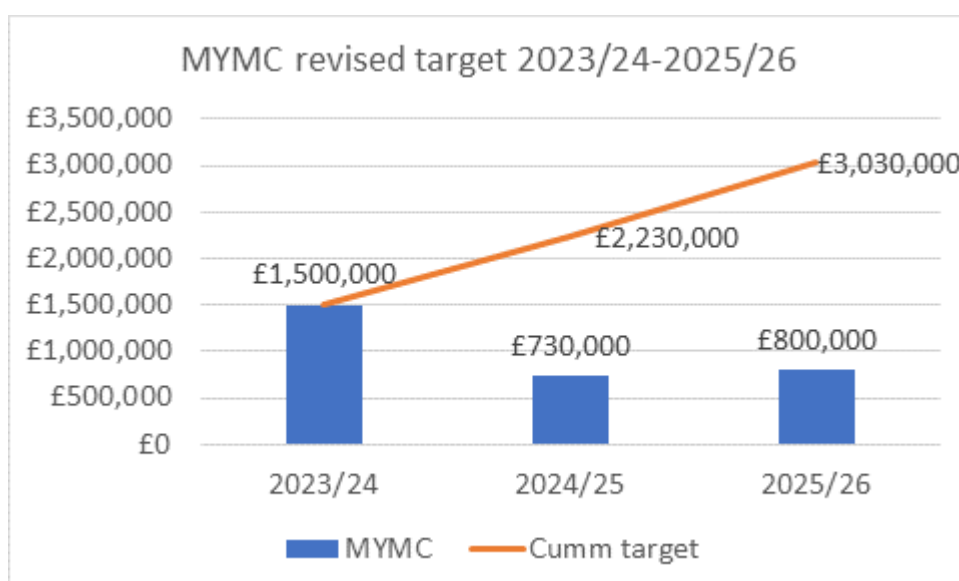
<sup>1</sup> the proportion of service requests made online compared to the total received online or through Customer Services. This excludes online payments and balances"

- Why can't the person I am speaking to tell me the answer, or why do I have to wait for an answer?

- 3.12 Addressing these challenges requires the Council to do substantive work on its processes to make sure every step adds value, to ensure that customers get a resolution more quickly and so that self-service versions of processes are easy to use. To improve the experience the Council may need to review certain policies for example to make sure they are clear and consistent.
- 3.13 In addition to processes and policies, the Council needs to continue to develop its staff development and performance management approach to ensure all teams are equipped to deliver quality customer service. Furthermore, systems will need to be developed, and where possible integrated with the self-service offer to reduce the need for staff or customers to re-type information in different systems, and ensure updates are provided promptly.
- 3.14 Organisational design is an important enabler. One part of the programme is to re-design the way teams are organised to create bigger more resilient teams, with teams who are skilled in a broader range of topics, improving the ability to resolve requests more swiftly.

### **Making Your Money Count**

- 3.15 The Making Your Money Count agenda aims to ensure the Council is financially resilient and can protect resources to deliver on priorities.
- 3.16 Spending cuts by central government, pressures arising from new legislative requirements or taxation, responding to challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic, and more recently inflationary pressures, have meant that the Council needs to identify and deliver around £3Million savings over the next three years.



**Figure 1. Making Your Money Count targets**

- 3.17 As a result of over a decade of government grant reductions (£.3Million) and unfunded inflation (£6Million) the Council has been required to deliver a number of budget saving programmes over the preceding years. The impact of successive years of spending reduction is that identifying options to reduce net spend has become ever more challenging.
- 3.18 Furthermore, the challenges presented by the cost of living crisis have created additional demand for services as well as putting pressure on Council budgets which is likely to escalate further in coming months.
- 3.19 In response to these drivers, the transformation programme has been set up to review all aspects of how the Council operates to improve efficiency, enhance productivity and ensure its resources go further towards supporting priorities.

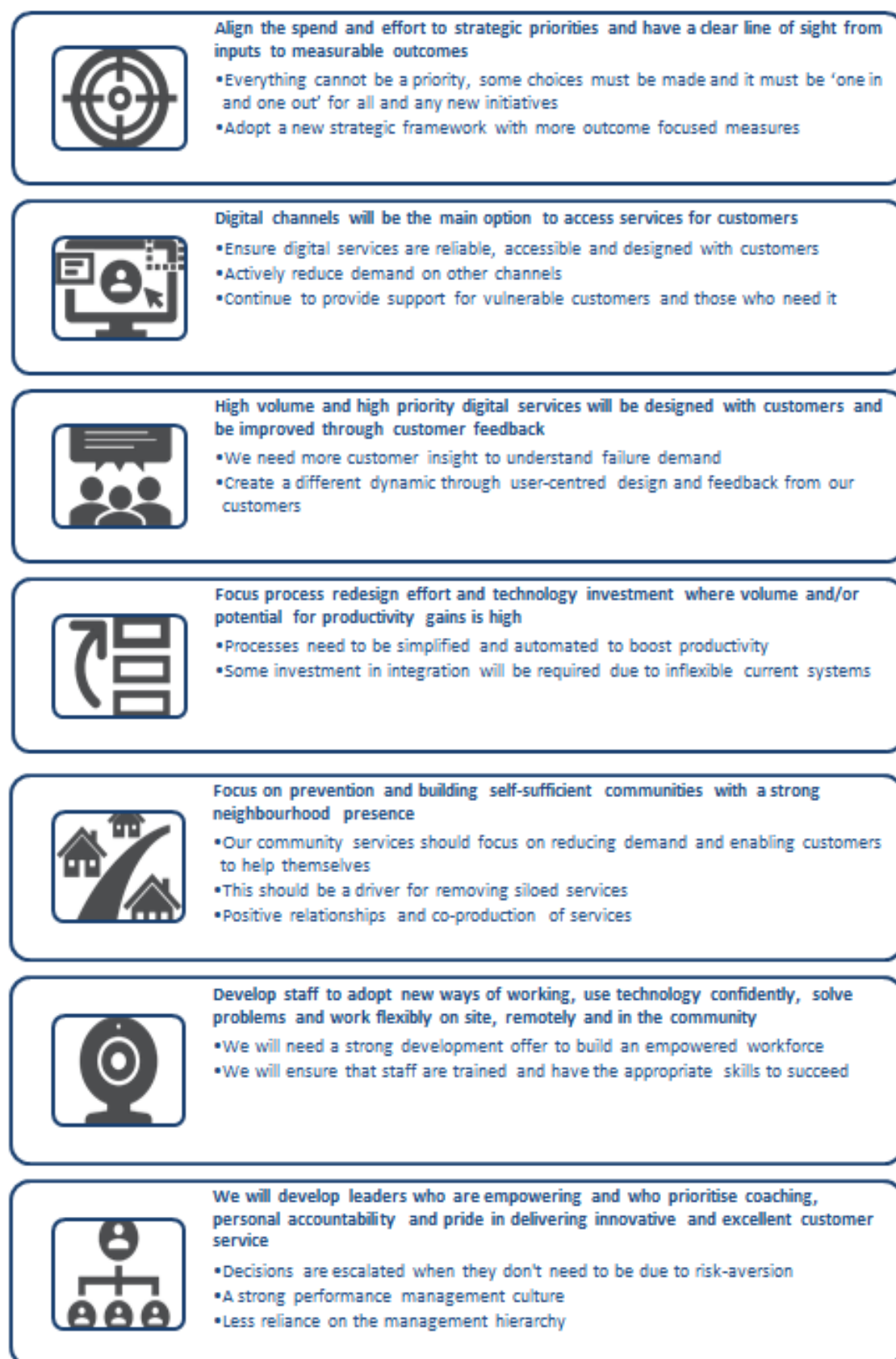
### **Vision**

- 3.20 The vision for the programme approved the Executive is:

*Customers are at the heart of our services. We will serve customers in a straightforward way, with resolution at the first point of contact and through the provision of easy to access online services that are so good, people prefer to use them. We will work cooperatively with residents to make sure services are designed with them.*

### **Foundation principles**

- 3.21 A set of foundation principles were agreed by Executive in August 2021. These foundation principles recognise the importance of working cooperatively across teams within the Council, and with partners too.
- 3.22 The principles set out guidelines based on what has worked well to date and where future improvements can be made to benefit customers and residents
- 3.23 The approach recognises that there will need to be investment and enhancement to our digital foundations, to help ensure these channels are reliable, accessible and available for many customers to choose to use.
- 3.24 A key principle of the new approach is to move to a “Digital First” approach, and ask customers to self-serve online wherever possible, to make resources go further. However, the proposed model recognises there is no one-size fits all approach. Some customers and service types will require in person support via the telephone or face to face and this support will remain crucial for many customers in the future.
- 3.25 The principles also seek to further embed the cooperative neighbourhood model, working closely with communities to help resolve problems, maintain a visible and proactive presence and help Council teams to work effectively together.
- 3.26 The foundation principles underpinning the programme are outlined below.



**Figure 2 Foundation Principles**

## Four themes and prioritisation

- 3.27 The transformation programme is organised into four main themes which were set out in August 2021 to help organise activities in the most efficient way and group particular skills and priorities together. The four themes are;
- Strategy and Commissioning
  - Resources
  - Service Delivery and Locality Model
  - Direct Services
- 3.28 These high-level themes are not an organisational structure, but are intended to help look at the resources available to deliver the Future Town, Future Council priorities, service and statutory duties. Delivery is being phased to ensure there is enough capacity to support each theme. The transformation programme will review all aspects of how the Council operates against the key principles (in section 3.21-3.26) to improve efficiency and ensure its resources go further towards supporting priorities.



**Figure 3 Four transformation themes**

- 3.29 The Service Delivery and Localities Theme aims to improve customer experience across all Council teams, across the various routes and means that residents and customers engage with the Council, and the way the Council works cooperatively with the community. This area is at the heart of the Council's ambition to be a Cooperative Council, and with an effective way to working within and across neighbourhoods. Given the potential benefits for customers, residents and the town, this area of work has been prioritised. In addition, this area covers the largest area of staff spend (approximately £9m).
- 3.30 Detailed analysis of the Council's costs has been undertaken to identify the potential staffing and cost base associated with each of the four themes above. It is anticipated that Transformation savings may come from de-layering management and moving to bigger teams with common activities grouped together compared to small teams with a narrower specialism. Furthermore, efficiency savings are anticipated from reducing waste in processes, improving automation and by improving services to achieve a 'right first time' approach. The detailed design work is still underway with plans to be further developed.

- 3.31 The Council's teams are at the heart of its work, supporting the town and residents with skill and dedication. In seeking productivity improvements, the use of digital and online tools, and changes to how the Council works, the Transformation programme is committed to providing teams and colleagues with opportunity to acquire new skills and experiences and transition effectively if or when any structural changes are made. With a challenging external recruitment market, the need to use agency staff to fill current gaps and areas that are hard to recruit, the Council's approach to change will be to manage change through staff turnover, providing training and development opportunities, clear succession and workforce planning to reduce staffing impacts as far as possible.

#### **First phase of work**

- 3.32 The phase of the transformation programme is underway. This phase is focused on improving the current customer services offer and implementing a Digital First approach in 2022/23. These changes are designed to improve the performance in the short to medium term and to facilitate savings which were included in the 22/23 budget. In addition to the measures below, additional short term resource is being recruited to help with improving performance.

- 3.33 Delivered milestones (2022/23 to date):

<b>Changes to opening hours</b>	Opening hours have been shortened by one hour at the end of the day to ensure maximum efficiency in the service ; by reallocating resource across a shorter day this reduces less busy periods and wasted time between calls.
<b>Prioritisation of phone options</b>	New Phone options were launched in the summer actively encouraging customers to go online and prioritising support for customers in urgent need.
<b>Dynamic scheduling of Repairs</b>	Customer Service staff are now able to offer more appointments to the customers at the point of contact and respond to digital enquiries faster
<b>Bulky waste booking</b>	Residents can book a bulky waste collection online, improving the experience and reducing the processing time needed by staff.

- 3.34 Future milestones (2022/23)

<b>Online Triage</b>	This Digital tool is in development and will help customers to find the right form / service online
<b>Complaints</b>	A fully digitised (end to end) two stage complaints process will make it easier for residents to log and track complaints online.
<b>Garage Lettings Digital offer</b>	A new lettings system will shortly be available to customers to bid and let available garages digitally



<b>My Stevenage Page</b>	A single login account for Stevenage tenants and residents with access to digital services, Housing Online, digital repairs and useful functionality like balance, tracking requests and open cases, information on local Ward, Councillor and (when needed) polling station allocated to the place of residence
<b>Assisted Waste Collections</b>	Digital system where residents can apply for waste collection assistance and make sure their bin is not missed. Increased automation will improve the experience.
<b>Tenancy/Garages keys</b>	Key issuing and returns via smart lockers. This will allow any time key/document collections, support any day tenancy, and reduce cost of garage voids
<b>Repairs appointments</b>	Customers will be able to fully self-serve online by raising and booking own repairs.
<b>Case management (Caseviewer)</b>	Ongoing work on converting our digital forms into Caseviewer system that will allow detailed traceability and progress of the cases raised by the customers
<b>Self-scanning kiosk at Customer Service Centre</b>	Drop in service for customers to have their documents scanned and validated by a member of staff (available only for documents that require validation)

#### **4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS**

- 4.1 The recommendation is to build on the work delivered to date by implementing a Five-Star Customer Service programme to address the challenges set out above.
- 4.2 The proposed Five-Star Customer Service programme is set out below in Figure 4. The programme includes a set of actions which together will improve customer satisfaction, reduce complaints and also support the Council's Making Your Money Count programme by releasing savings:

1. Accessible services online and 24/7
2. Easy to use and trackable processes
3. Spot and solve issues before they arise
4. An answer first time and clear on next steps
5. Personalised advice and support

**Figure 4. FIVE STAR CUSTOMER SERVICE PROGRAMME**



### **Workstream 1: Accessible services, online & 24/7**

- 4.3 To enable 24/7 access to services, it is proposed to maximise use of digital self-service, in order to help the Council to prioritise staff resources to the customers and services that benefit most.
- 4.4 The goals for this workstream are to:
- Improve service options available online
  - Test new online services with customers
  - Make it easier for people to use the website
  - Implement new options, such as a chatbot
  - Prioritise phone and face to face services for those who need it
- 4.5 This will be achieved through a combination of new ways of working, more use of the Council's core existing technologies, and investment in new technology and customer facing processes. A summary of the approach is outlined below:

Digital First Channel Strategy			
	Past	Now	Customer Hub
Digital self-service	Limited functionality typically collating and emailing a request to a service. Lacked usability	Phasing in Digital First approach, providing more digital services that mirror the service over the phone	Continue development and provide alternative ways to find and access our services such as chatbots and self-service triage
Telephone	Most advertised channel, service varied from switchboard to full transaction handling	Revising call options to prioritise high needs and assist Digital First approach	Consider automated telephony options as an alternative for people without internet access
Face to face	Drop-in with 20min wait, no prioritisation to people that needed extra help	Appointments with guidelines of what they're best used for	Introduce more alternatives such as smart locker key collection and self-service scanning of documents
Email	Emails often took inconsistent routes and lacked monitoring or process automation	Removing email addresses from website where digital self-service available	Automate email handling where possible and handle consistently with other channels
Social media	Small volumes, handled without service standards and with limited effectiveness due to nature of medium	Phasing out direct messages in favour of better alternatives	Signpost customers to digital self service, review ability to comment on some posts

**Figure 5 Channel approach - Past/ Now / Future**

4.6 Examples worth highlighting are:

- MyStevenage account – a single login for most digital services and provides them personalised information on their account page such as their upcoming bin collections, which will be added to over time (main exclusion will be that Revenues and Benefits, and Planning services will still require a separate login).
- Chatbot – this web technology imitates human conversation through a series of questions to identify what a customer needs help finding or to walk them through simple processes. As this technology is rapidly evolving it is intended to start with a simple chatbot and build its complexity through different versions, trying alternative technologies as needed.
- Smart lockers – secure and electronically controlled lockers in the town centre that will enable customers to pick up or drop off items to us using a PIN. The main use case is to enable key pick-up and drop-off for any-day tenancy start and end, although further possibilities will be considered such as providing access to emergency equipment.

***Workstream 2: Easy to use trackable processes***

4.7 The goals for this workstream are to:

- Redesign processes so they are simple and as few steps as possible
- Be clear with customers what happens next
- Replace email with an online system where customers can check progress and updates.

4.8 Most customer requests received online are passed to services by email. Generic email inboxes are used by a number of support teams to store and handle customer enquiries. While this has advantages, there are number of downsides including: lack of progress visibility to customers or other staff, lack of clarity on who is owning an issue, and difficulty performance-managing staff.

4.9 The proposed approach is to capture and maintain customer requests in a case management system. This means there will be an ongoing audit trail, automated updates to the customer, easy re-assignment to different staff or team, and monitoring of performance.

4.10 Customer feedback and lessons learnt can be captured at the end of the process, which will make it easier to identify the root cause of any future complaints or issues.



**Figure 6 Case management approach**

### ***Workstream 3: Spot and solve issues before they arise***

The goals for this workstream are to:

- Develop all staff to be proactive problem solvers
- Improve data and reporting so we can spot issues early
- Communicate changes and give timely updates
- Test new services with customers before launching them

- 4.11 Currently satisfaction is captured through telephone surveys at the end of a call. As the Council's customers increasingly use self-service options it becomes important to provide additional feedback routes covering the full range of services.
- 4.12 More structured feedback and insight mechanisms will be established to replace the less formal activities staff currently use to pass on and consider what customers are saying, including by updating the feedback mechanisms on the website and providing the opportunity to feedback at the end of every case.
- 4.13 At the same time, the Council's existing customer-focussed ethos will be built on through a coaching-culture, and a focus on simple but effective staff actions which facilitate staff proactively solving problems, such as:
- Empathise with a customer's situation, the 'relative test', treat the customer as you would want a relative to be treated.
  - Focus on what the Council can do for a customer, and/or help them to alternatives elsewhere if their ideal solution cannot be provided

- Always tell the customer what will happen next and when
  - Consider if a customer's situation means other services might be appropriate – for instance someone applying for an assisted waste collection might benefit from a tenancy visit, or it might help someone moving home to tell them about the Council's skip and garage storage offer
  - Be clear when something is not part of the council's service / what the service standard is
  - Consider if a customer's situation is particularly unusual whether it merits over-ruling the normal process?
- 4.14 In addition to feedback about individual service requests, it is a priority to have good resident involvement in designing local priorities. The Council has adopted a Co-operative Neighbourhood model which has seen the Borough divided into six localities, with the objective of co-ordinating services at a neighbourhood level and supporting the growth of local initiatives created by residents, communities, partners and engaging with the different groups living and working within Stevenage.
- 4.15 Through the Five-Star Customer Service programme a Locality Services team will be created to further embed this approach through creating the capability needed to help engage with residents, as well as improve planning and problem solving in each local neighbourhood area. The proposal is to create a more integrated team covering a range of neighbourhood-based services. It will further strengthen the current approach by closer co-ordination of activities across relevant teams. The scope is still to be finalised, but this could include for example Community Development (including the Neighbourhood Wardens), Residents and Estates Services, Green spaces teams, Town Centre Management and Markets, Events, Leisure and Culture.
- 4.16 Through locality work, the goal is to create better relationships with Council teams, residents, and partners, and by doing so, increase the level of participation and improve everyone's experience of engaging with the Council. This will be achieved by:
- Providing wide ranging and easy to use engagement channels, which build on the existing Co-operative Neighbourhood's model
  - Delivering high quality services that are tailored to community needs by applying local data and insight
  - Encouraging even better relationships with key stakeholders by developing community led plans for local people to identify priorities and make decisions for their neighbourhood and the town
  - Co-ordinating local services and projects within local areas to reduce duplication

#### ***Workstream 4: An answer first time and clear on next steps***

- 4.17 The goals for this workstream are to:
- Deliver a customer service induction for all new starters, and a rolling programme for existing staff
  - Implement a single source of service information for staff
  - Ensure updates are easy to find in systems
- 4.18 Increasing the knowledge that staff have and enabling them to easily access information means that customer queries can be answered more quickly and by the first person they speak to in the Council.
- 4.19 As teams become more multi-functional, and the need to adapt to higher levels of staff turnover continues to grow, it is important to ensure staff have access to high quality information at their fingertips. At the same time, to ensure that the service offer remains aligned and consistent across the channels customers use to access services changes to customer guidance, the services offered, or the process used, need to be applied at the same time.
- 4.20 Therefore, it is proposed that a new knowledgebase will be introduced to bring together our single source of guidance, procedure and policy. This information will be updated and maintained to ensure that the liaison between customer services to ensure that any customer-facing information is released in a co-ordinated manner.
- 4.21 This knowledgebase, combined with a fresh induction for all staff on 5 Star Customer Service will provide people with the information and tools to answer customers first time and be clear on next steps. This induction will facilitate the culture of acting as one team and taking responsibility for providing customers queries and will support all aspects of the Five-Star Customer Service programme.
- 4.22 These approaches will improve the standard of the Council's work, consistency across access channels and members of staff, and make it easier to onboard new staff.

#### ***Workstream 5: Personalised advice and support for those who need it***

- 4.23 The goals for this workstream are to:
- Implement and Advice and Support service for people needing extra help
  - Train staff to give advice on a range of services
  - Find the best source of help which may be a partner organisation
- 4.24 The Advice and Support service will be a centre of excellence, providing tailored help to those customers who need it. The new service provides an opportunity to meet a wide range of support needs of individuals, and to focus on intervening early to support people before needs escalate, as well as helping people at points of crisis.

4.25 The service will support residents to improve their wellbeing while reducing the cost of intervention, aiming to:

- Provide customer with both short and long term support and advice
- Prevent escalation of issues (and the associated increase in cost to the council and partners)
- Provide crisis intervention

The topics which customers can access support and advice on are expected to include: temporary and emergency accommodation; rough sleeping, homelessness, housing advice, first time lets, debt advice, alcohol / substance misuse, family intervention, domestic abuse, safeguarding and services for older people. The design of the service will determine whether it is best to incorporate all or part of these functions in the Advice and Support service.

4.26 While many teams currently work together regularly on case work, there is an opportunity to develop a more joined up approach which will improve the impact of the respective services, as well as the experience of the users of the service.

4.27 There are five key elements which will drive the design and implementation of the service detailed below:

1. One way to access services	In the current model one person may have to contact a number of different teams for support. By looking at issues in isolation, opportunities to help or refer for help may be missed. The proposal is to provide a single access point for customers who may have multiple different needs. A triage approach will be taken to ensure that appropriate support is provided.
2. Quality conversations	Good communication, judgement and practice expertise will guide the way the service will work with people. By ensuring quality conversations, the service will ensure that there are robust and supportive assessments, interventions and meaningful change for those who engage with the service.
3. An evidence based approach	The service will use an evidence-based approach when assessing and supporting individuals and will be informed by up to date knowledge, research and safeguarding review findings.
4. Maximising partnership working	Collaboration between practitioners, internal and external partners is essential to ensure prompt assessment and provision of advice and support by the most appropriate team or organisation. Referrals will be made for example to Hertfordshire County



	Council's social care services, Citizen's Advice or the internal income and debt team as appropriate.
5. Staff culture and expertise	Staff will require a range of expertise to holistically assess and support resident needs, and in line with the wider transformation plans there will be a focus on people being trained across a number of different areas of expertise.

#### **Enabler: Customer engagement**

- 4.28 Customer / resident input into the design of new services is essential to make sure the Council invests its resources into actions which best meet their needs. It is proposed that consultation will happen through a number of routes as outlined below:

Type of consultation	Proposed approach	Timing
Consultation to seek resident views on the Five-Star programme to ensure it meets their needs	Workshop(s) with a representative group of residents	Autumn 2022
Involve customers in testing new services on the website	Online or in person customer testing panels. Sharing early versions of services	Ongoing
Build feedback mechanisms into new processes to ensure satisfaction is monitored	As new processes are built, include final stage to give feedback	Ongoing
Engagement in setting local neighbourhood priorities/ plans	Resident engagement through the Cooperative Neighbourhood model	Ongoing

#### **Enabler: Organisational development and culture change**

- 4.29 In order to ensure effective change, an organisational development programme is proposed which focuses on three key areas;
1. *A customer-focused culture* – embedding the Five-Star principles in the way staff work, and into performance management approaches, as well as ensuring customer feedback drives the improvement of services.

2. *Turning data into insight that can be used* – ensuring that teams are able to effectively collect and use data to measure service performance and to improve services.
3. *Improving processes* – building staff skills to create fit for purpose processes which cut out waste and ensure that processes meet customer needs.

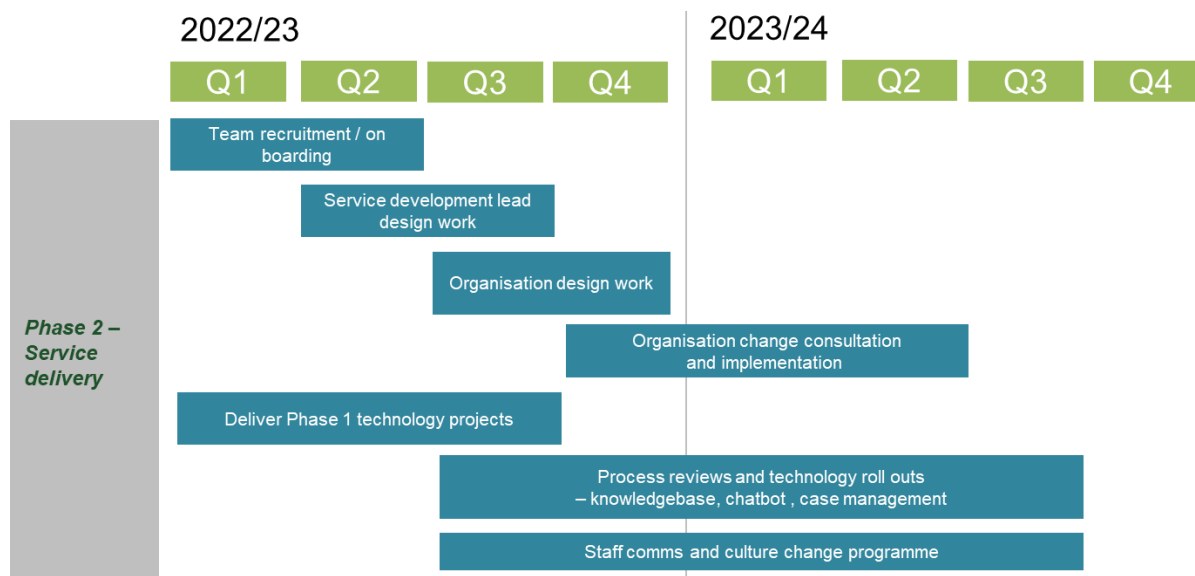
#### **Enabler: Organisation design**

- 4.30 It is anticipated the Council may need to deliver some structural changes in order to enable the changes outlined in the Five-star Customer Service programme, as well as to release savings. The first phase of organisation design change is being scoped and an outline of the team structure and intended outcomes for each area is provided in Appendix 1. This is subject to further design work but in order to improve the handling of cases the programme is expected to implement larger multi-skilled teams. Any structural changes will be subject to consultation with affected staff.

#### **Implementation plan and proposed next steps**

- 4.31 A programme team is being mobilised to deliver the actions outlined above. This includes additional project management and digital resource as well as service development leads for key priority areas.
- 4.32 The programme will be taking forward a number of activities over the next phase:
- Concluding the work on phase 1 technology improvements (outlined in section 3.34 above).
  - Creating detailed designs and go live plans for new team areas (i.e. those outlined in Appendix 1), including proposed structures and re-designed processes.
  - Development of enabling technology for the next phase , including
    - procurement of the knowledge tool to be used across customer teams
    - phased roll out of a chatbot to enable customers to self-service simple information and advice online
    - Creating new processes/ workflows in the Digital Platform to log and track cases corresponding to each of the new team areas.
  - Developing and implementing an organisation development strategy (covering the elements outlined in 4.29 above), communications plan, and training programme for staff.
  - A key step is that the first phase of organisation design work will be taken forward over the next few months with consultation in early 2023. This is essential in order to enable further changes and ensure savings delivery from 2023/24.

4.33 A high level implementation plan is set out below.



**Figure 7 Implementation Plan**

### Alternative options

- 4.34 Alternative options (listed below) have been discounted as they cannot release cashable savings while maintaining the service offer.
- 4.35 Implement technology and process improvements without reviewing team structures. As outlined in 3.12 to 3.14, all aspects need to be reviewed together in order to deliver the savings levels and improvements to customer experience required.
- 4.36 Generating further commercial opportunities and income: the Council already has an agreed Co-operative Commercial and Insourcing Strategy (2021), with a clear action plan to generate additional income which can fund priorities and protect local services, which is also a part of the Making Your Money Count programme.

## 5 IMPLICATIONS

### Financial Implications

- 5.1 The transformation programme will contribute to the three-year target as set out in paragraph 3.16.
- 5.2 Further detailed design is required to identify the savings to be delivered in 2023/24. Services in scope for the next phase, implementation of the Service Delivery and Localities Model, include approximately £9Million staffing spend associated, a 5% saving would generate £450K, the programme could deliver up to a 10-15% efficiency saving or £1.35Million over time.
- 5.3 Subject to approval of the scope, budget is in place in order to deliver the next phase of changes required. However it is anticipated that further

business cases may be brought forward for targeted transformation projects as required.

### Legal Implications

- 5.4 There are no identified direct legal implications from the recommendations contained in this report. However, officers responsible for delivering the activity set out within this report may need to consider any resulting legal implications in consultation with the Borough Solicitor.

### Risk Implications

- 5.5 The key risks associated with the report are:

Risk description (Cause / consequence)	Mitigation
Current performance pressures in Customer Services impact on customer satisfaction and Council's capacity for change	Invest in temporary adviser resources to support Customer Services through changes and to improve performance.
Involvement of residents in the design of the future service model.	Design a programme of resident engagement to seek views on the key issues to be tackled through the programme and their priorities for transformational improvements.
Appropriate staff involvement and consultation	All Staff communications and engagement Regular staffside (unions) briefings Staff champions programme to be developed to ensure changes are effectively communicated and staff are engaged.
If there is insufficient ICT and digital capacity or skills, opportunities to exploit technology will not be realised.	ICT Strategy in place to deliver foundation work. Additional roles appointed in Digital and Web team to support online service delivery. Business cases for additional resource to be brought forward as required. Seek third party support where appropriate.
If the focus of the transformation programme is limited to structural change	Investment in process redesign and technology improvements.

only it is unlikely to meet the desired benefit levels.	Appointment of temporary Service Development Leads to ensure opportunities fully considered.
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### **Policy Implications**

- 5.6 There are no specific policy implications of this report. Policies related to specific service areas may be reviewed as required and decisions taken in line with the Council's scheme of delegation, for example revised policies related to payment options and how the Council will treat debt.
- 5.7 In parallel with this report in October 2022 a revised Customer Complaints Policy and Unacceptable Behaviour policy will be brought to Executive in order to create a policy which will meet the housing ombudsman's new requirements.

### **Climate Change Implications**

- 5.8 Moving to more digital service delivery and improving the productivity of the Council will have a positive impact on the environment and support the Council's Climate Change Strategy for example:
- Reducing the Council's and residents' reliance on paper to deliver/ access services.
  - Improving efficiency in service delivery will improve efficient use of resources (fuel for fleet etc)

### **Staffing and Accommodation Implications**

- 5.9 Overall the proposals may result in a reduced headcount as a result of efficiencies e.g. increased adoption of self-service tools, greater automation and reducing management layers.
- 5.10 The design of future structures will take into consideration the possible impacts of reduced staffing on business continuity and emergency planning.
- 5.11 It is aimed that by moving to bigger, cross-functional teams there will be greater day to day resilience than currently as more staff will be trained across a number of different areas.
- 5.12 Long term accommodation requirements are being considered as part of the Council's Hub programme. A reduced headcount will provide greater flexibility for the Council's accommodation strategy, although this needs to be balanced against requirements of other programmes/ strategies which may see growth (e.g. Commercial). Considerations will be given to the space requirements for example more staff may need to be co-located together to support the new Service Delivery model.

### **Human Resources Implications**

- 5.13 A significant proportion of Council spend is on staffing and the transformation programme may result in a headcount reduction over time. Where possible the approach taken will minimise the impact on staff, such as looking at options to deliver savings through staff turnover rather than redundancy.
- 5.14 The Council will need to deliver some structural changes in order to enable the changes outlined in the Five-star Customer Service programme. In order to improve the handling of cases the programme is expected to implement larger multi-skilled teams. The outline structure proposed in Appendix 1 is still at concept stage and specific staffing implications of detailed design work will be considered in due course
- 5.15 Where structural change may be needed, this will be managed in accordance with the Council's Organisational Change Policy. Our established approach is to work close with Trade Unions and staff, to plan ahead, reduce disruption where possible, to look at suitable options for opportunities such as retraining where colleagues are impacted by change.
- 5.16 Future proposals will be subject to consultation with affected staff.
- 5.17 All staffing relating proposals that come forward will have an associated workforce EQiA undertaken.

### **Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 5.18 Overall, there are no identified for most characteristics. Under the Digital First approach, alternative options will remain available for those who require support in person or over the phone. The addition of new ways to access services online is likely to have positive impacts for those with some types of disability.
- 5.19 Equalities impact assessments for further specific changes yet to be fully scoped, will be delivered in parallel with project plans/ business cases.

### **Service Delivery Implications**

- 5.20 The report outlines a redesign of the way Council services are delivered. The proposals are intended to strengthen the current offer and build in additional resilience into service delivery teams. The programme aims to protect service delivery by ensuring that efficiency improvements have been implemented before any headcount reduction is made.

### **Information Technology Implications**

- 5.21 A shared ICT Partnership Strategy is in place with an associated delivery programme. The strategy was reviewed by the partnership in early 2022 and considered fit for purpose to meet the requirements of SBC's transformation programme.
- 5.22 Delivery of the ICT Strategy programme will enable further transformation by providing stable foundations for technology.

- 5.23 Key systems have been procured and implemented which will enable the transformation programme including Microsoft 365, a Digital Platform, website, and Robotic Process Automation tools.
- 5.24 The immediate technology priorities to support Phase 2 of transformation include: further development of case management and workflow in the Council's digital platform (including integrations with other systems), implementation of digital engagement tools, extension of reporting tools, chatbot and AI technology and knowledgebase tools.
- 5.25 A review of telephony and contact centre systems is being conducted across the ICT partnership as a joint project with East Herts District Council.
- 5.26 A digital technology assessment has been completed which outlined potential future priorities for investment. Future priorities may include a review and re-procurement of payments technology in line with the end of the current contract, optimising support service systems, including finance systems, as well as business cases for moving legacy systems to cloud technologies.
- 5.27 Further business cases for system improvements may be brought forward in due course.

## **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

None.

## **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 – Transformation: Service Delivery and Localities Team Structure (outline).