

TITLE	21st Century Council - Update
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	The Executive on Thursday, 21 February 2019
WARD	None Specific;
LEAD OFFICER	Chief Executive – Heather Thwaites
LEAD MEMBER	Executive Member for Finance, HR and Corporate Resources - Anthony Pollock

PURPOSE OF REPORT (INC STRATEGIC OUTCOMES)

The report updates members and the public on the progress of the Council's C21 change programme. This transformation of the way the Council operates is intended to achieve the following benefits:

- Improved availability of, and access to, Council services through digital channels
- Swifter resolution of issues and queries
- Ability for residents to track the progress of their issue as it is resolved by the Council
- Greater focus on problem-solving and customer responsiveness
- A leaner, more efficient Council costing significantly less to run

RECOMMENDATION

The Executive is recommended to note the progress in implementing the 21st Century Council programme and that future updates will be reported as part of the ongoing Revenue Monitoring Executive Reports, as part of a broader council wide continuous improvement programme.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Executive has been receiving quarterly reports during the implementation period reporting on progress of the implementation of the programme and the revenue return on investment.

BACKGROUND

The C21 Change Programme forms an essential element of the savings contained within the medium term Financial Plan. The programme involves the implementation of a new model of working and organisation for the Council. It is underpinned by an extensive IT programme and is intended to extend to all parts of the organisation over the implementation period. Implementation commenced following Executive approval of the business case in September 2016.

The implementation was phased into two parts, to ensure transition to the new model of working is safe and effective.

Phase 1 ran from October 2016 to Spring 2017 and included the establishment of the reconfigured senior leadership team and the reconfiguration of the Council's support services together with strategy and commissioning.

Phase 2 is being implemented in two phases. The current phase entails the establishment of the Council's Customer and Localities functions encompassing the following service areas:

- Environment
- Income and Assessments
- Housing
- Customer Services

Beyond phase 2 the C21C methodology and principles will be applied to People's services, however this will be part of a wider service continuous improvement programme (for both Children's and Adults).

Progress is set out below:

BUSINESS CASE (Including Options and Evidence of Need)

The implementation of the new Customer and Localities has continued to progress well since the last report. The new staffing structures are now in place and embedding. These comprise the teams reporting to:

Clare Lawrence – AD Place (Development Management, Highways and Transport Management; Contract Management of Shared Services, Waste, Grounds Maintenance, the Countryside Service etc.)

Mark Cupit – AD Delivery and Infrastructure (Strategic Development Locations; Major Highway and Infrastructure schemes, Specialist Highway and Drainage advice: CIL and Infrastructure funding; and Heritage and Green Infrastructure)

Jude Whyte – AD Customer and Localities (the new roles of Customer Management; Case Management and Locality Services)

Simon Price – AD Housing, Income and Assessment.

The implementation of the new Customer and Localities Directorate has delivered the full business case saving and every effort has been made to reduce the impact on our staff. Headline staffing impact figures for this phase are; 240 staff were assimilated and 82 staff

were redeployed into new roles. 14 staff resigned for a variety of reasons or were made redundant. Prior to the restructure the holding of vacancies and the use of agency staff has helped reduce the number of staff made redundant.

It was always planned that a phased and deliberately cautious go-live programme of the new service areas would be applied bearing in mind the need for safe transition and this is currently underway. This is intended to ensure that the move to the new operating model is carried out in a planned and tested way so as to ensure that disruption for customers and service users is minimised.

The timetable for this is below and is running to plan:

Service Area	Go Live Date
Customer Delivery	1 st October 2018
Development Management	1 st October 2018
Income	12 th November 2018
Resident and Assessment	12 th November 2018
Housing	February/March 2019
Highways	April 2019

Below is an update on each of these areas and the key customer benefits delivered or in train to be delivered as per the timetable above:

Customer Delivery

This is the deepening and enhancing of the Council's Customer Team in order that more and more interactions can be resolved quickly and accurately. In its first months of going live this has already achieved:

- 85% of all calls are now resolved at first point of contact (compared to 65-70% previously).
- Land Charges searches now able to resolve for customers within 4-5 working days, previously 15 working days.
- Central Scanning and Printing service means this is done more effectively with less staff leading to efficiencies in the Housing Benefit and Cashiers Services.
- Frontline points of contact for Housing Benefit and Housing Needs are being combined to offer a unified service to local residents.

Development Management

In November 99% of planning applications were determined within national targets. This has been our best performance ever and has resulted from streamlining the planning application process especially for simpler householder applications. This has been facilitated by other such as:

- **New mapping facility:** we have introduced a new mapping product and specifically two maps related to [planning applications](#); and [planning constraints](#)
- **Online payments:** The Council has introduced its own online payments functionality for ease of use <https://webpayments.wokingham.gov.uk/Default.aspx>

- **Planning search facility:** We have updated our current Planning search page to enable more relevant information to be displayed and introduced more ways to search for applications.
- **Planning Comments:** The way people make comments has also been improved and a document containing the comments will appear on the website within an hour of being submitted. Customers can check the website if they want to see if any comments have been made on their application
- **Pre-application service:** we have constructed an online form for pre-application requests to make it easier to submit. This also includes document submission and, with the online payments system, we hope this will encourage more people to submit pre-application requests. The pre-application service adds significant benefit to the planning process it enables issues to be raised at the earliest stage possible.

Income

Stage one of the Council Tax Portal (called CA-R) has been launched so that customers are able to let us know about changes in circumstances, set up direct debits, make payments and apply for discounts online. The planned second stage of the introduction of this model will lead to a self-service solution for three out of the top five reasons why customers contact us by phone about their Council Tax account.

Resident and Assessment

Housing Benefit Portal launched so customers are able to apply for a Change of Circumstances, update address information and submit a new claim and supporting documents. Improved section of the website.

Cross-skilling of teams within the Residents and Assessment cluster has led to teams at the frontline being more widely expert and therefore able to help customers with a larger range of enquiries at the same time.

The commissioning of an online Registrars booking system will provide a 24 hour accessible facility to our customers and will allow the Resident and Assessment Service to continue to improve in the context of the efficiencies introduced as part of the programme.

Housing

The Housing Needs Team are already working closely with the Residents and Assessment Team within Customer Delivery prior to their move to that service by March 2019. This changed working has already seen improvements in the frontline service and in allowing movement within the service to more closely meet trends in business.

The Neighbourhood Housing Officers and Sheltered Scheme Managers who provide services to our tenants will move into the Localities Service in early spring. This move will bring these functions together with services that work in our neighbourhoods and contribute to our ambitions for our Localities Service.

The Housing Service will see the launch of an online portal and consequent improvements in processes and system and the customer offer.

Localities

Community Hubs – our libraries already offered a significant proportion of services and resources expected as part of the C21 deliverables. Within three libraries we have also begun to offer an enhanced range of customer services functions for residents.

Community Environmental – people from different historic teams are now working together to respond to customer enquiries and conduct inspections. Work is now allocated from a central point and the team have introduced enhanced enforcement capabilities for issues such as fly-tipping and littering.

Community Engagement – the community development service and community wardens have been merged into one operational team.

Highways

The improvements will be delivered alongside the implementation of a new supplier contract in April 2019 and will include:

- Improved Highways Fault reporting process online
- Online process for Street Name and Numbering
- Improved web content
- A new Highways Performance Management Framework which is aligned to the Wokingham Highways Inspection Policy

People Services

In respect of People Services, now that the new directors in Adults and Children's Services have had time to assess their respective service areas they have begun to work through action plans and these will be presented in due course outside of this quarterly programme update.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.

At the end of financial year 2019/20 the programme (phase 1 and phase 2) will have secured £3m p.a. of savings (full year effect) as stated in the table below. The £1m savings relating to People Services will be dealt with as part of a wider set of efficiency and growth plans within the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan.

	<i>£'000</i>	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	Total
	Revenue	710	2,180	1,500	0	4,390
Business Case	Capital	2,752	1,577	0	0	4,329
	Saving	0	(2,000)	(2,000)	0	(4,000)
	Revenue	600	1,909	1,492	389	4,390
Actual/Forecast	Capital	900	2,083	1,146	200	4,329
	Saving	0	(2,000)	(750)	(250)	(3,000)
	Revenue	110	271	8	(389)	0
Variance	Capital	1,852	(506)	(1,146)	(200)	0
	Saving	0	0	1,250	(250)	1,000

Other Financial Information

None.

Stakeholder Considerations and Consultation

Included in the report.

Resourcing and Timeline for Next Steps

Implementation of Customer and Localities should largely be complete by the end of the financial year. The work will be undertaken by the new teams together with support from the programme team. This will be delivered within the existing agreed programme cost.

Timeline for Review and Evaluation

Revised business cases to cover the former People Services areas have been brought forward as part of the preparation of the MTFP in the first quarter of 2019.

List of Background Papers

None

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Service 21st Century Programme

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