1. Introduction

With the Shaping Dorset Council (SDC) programme nearing completion of the first of three pre-defined gateway stages (Gateway 1 Discovery Phase Closed), SWAP was commissioned to carry out a programme gateway review. The purpose of this gateway review was to provide assurance to the appointed Chief Executive (designate) of the new Dorset Council, as well as other programme stakeholders, that the SDC programme is on track to deliver the new Dorset Council from the 1st April 2019, as well as providing a level of confidence that the programme is well placed to progress to the next stage of implementation.

Whilst clearly, the SDC programme is constrained within a set timescale, the overall objective of this gateway review has been to assess how well placed the programme is in certain areas moving forward to the next stage, as well as highlighting any opportunities that we believe could be taken to enhance the programme and/ or increase the chances of programme success.

2. Agreed Scope of our Gateway Review

The scope of our work was agreed by the SDC Programme Board and specifically looked to assess/ provide confirmation that:

- All discovery phase activities are complete, with any outstanding tasks captured and with actions to close them
- The process of producing service implementation plans has been undertaken using a robust methodology
- Plans appear achievable with an appropriate allocation of resources
- There is confidence that the programme can progress to the next stage of implementation based on current plans
- There is confidence that implementation plans will adequately allow for the transition & operation of services from day 1
- There is on-going sponsorship and stakeholder support for the programme
- Stakeholders fully understand the programme status and the issues involved
- The necessary skills, experience and resources are deployed on the programme
- That there are processes in place to adequately manage risks, dependencies and decisions
- Target timescales and programme budgets are on track and can be achieved
- That actions have been taken to implement the recommendations of earlier programme assurance reports

Agreed Scope Exclusions

- Review of convergence and transformation activity planning did not form a part of this gateway review
- Similarly, the likelihood of achievement of the overall financial savings set out in the Local Partnerships Business Case was not assessed as part of this review.

It should be noted that our gateway review provides a snapshot view of progress, at a point in time and, therefore, should be seen as complementary to other internal programme oversight and scrutiny processes, and not a replacement for them.

Amendments to Scope

On commencement of our work, it was clear that although Discovery Phase activities were nearing completion, there were a range of tasks and sign-offs still required to demonstrate that this phase had been adequately completed. At the time of reporting for this review (29.10.18), work remained ongoing to complete the necessary tasks.

Our gateway review therefore slightly changed in focus; not seeking to provide assurance that the discovery phase was effectively closed with all plans completed, but instead to validate the reported programme status, as well as assessing the confidence of programme stakeholders at this stage in the programme.

3. Methodology

Our review consisted of interviews with key programme stakeholders, as well as liaising with the SDC programme team for information and confirmations.

We reviewed and analysed 12 service implementation plans in detail, across the themes of Place, People and Corporate, as well as broader analysis of the discovery phase programme activity and documentation within these themes.

We also undertook an electronic survey of 211 officers from across the Dorset authorities involved within the SDC programme, where we asked a series of 14 questions asking respondents to score their agreement on a scale of 1-10, as well as seeking their overall views on the programme. We received 75 completed surveys, which given the tight response deadlines (due to the reporting deadline for this gateway review), we believe represents a relatively good and representative response rate (36%).

Due to previous SWAP assurance work in relation to the SDC programme governance, where possible we have placed reliance on the recent and relevant findings from our previous work.

4. Delivery Confidence Assessment

As highlighted above, due to the fact that the Discovery Phase of the programme remains ongoing (although is now nearing completion), it has been challenging to provide an overall Delivery Confidence Assessment at this stage. As such we have spilt out our Delivery Confidence Assessments for each respective area within the scope of this review (see Section 6).

The full Delivery Confidence Assessment criteria has been set out in Appendix C, but from our gateway review, our assessments fell into one of the following two criteria:

Assessment		Criteria Description
		Successful delivery appears probable. However, constant attention will be needed to ensure risks do not materialise into major issues threatening delivery.
		Successful delivery appears feasible but important issues exist requiring management attention. These appear resolvable at this stage and, if addressed promptly, should not present overruns.

5. Headline Conclusions

The overall headline conclusions of our gateway review were as follows:

- Whilst we have evidenced that the majority of discovery phase activity has either been completed or drafted, the final work within this phase remains ongoing and therefore our report, while originally intended to provide assurance that the discovery phase is effectively closed, is not fully able to do so.

- However, from the evidence that we have seen, as well as confirmations from the programme team, it is intended that the vast majority of the substance of this phase will be completed within the next two/three weeks, and we have verified that plans and resources are in place to address the areas requiring action.

- At this stage, the delays to finalising discovery phase activities do not appear likely to have a significant impact on the overall programme delivery timescales. Tasks to deliver operational readiness are underway and are being implemented alongside discovery phase activities being finalised.

- From our review and dip-testing of discovery phase activities, we were broadly able to confirm that the programme dashboard status (included at Appendix A) provided an accurate and realistic assessment of the current programme status and activities (as at 22.10.18). It was clear that a significant amount of activity and tasks had come together and/ or been signed off in the last few weeks.

- As highlighted on the programme dashboard (Appendix A), the majority of work still to complete within the discovery phase is in relation to coordination activities once all service implementation plans have been signed off i.e. coordinating and summarising key decisions required in advance of 1st April, as well as effectively capturing and assessing dependencies identified by service areas, along with the necessary actions required.

- The responses from our survey of officers involved in the SDC programme generally demonstrated a positive level of confidence that the programme will be able to deliver a safe and legal Council from 1st April, and that service implementation plans had adequately and thoroughly captured the necessary actions, and were achievable by 1st April.

- Our detailed testing of implementation plans has, in some cases, highlighted concerns with the robustness/ completeness of the plans; this may impact on the successful implementation and monitoring of these plans in the next phase.

- However, we appreciate that with the fast-paced nature of the SDC programme there may need to be a higher risk appetite in relation to some of the detail and qualitative aspects of the plans being put together.

6. Delivery Confidence Assessments and Findings

Below are the key areas of our review, along with the individual assessments and respective key findings:

Assessment	Gateway Review Area
	All Discovery Phase activities are complete, with any outstanding tasks captured and with actions to close them

At the time of our gateway review, the discovery phase of the programme remains ongoing, although as highlighted above, th... vast majority of the substance of this phase is planned to be completed within the next two/three weeks, and we have verifie... that plans and resources are in place to address the areas requiring action. This is likely to mean that the discovery phase will effectively be completed six weeks after the original programme deadline for this phase, although at this stage this is unlikely to significantly impact the overall programme delivery timescales.

The programme dashboard (attached at Appendix A) highlights the key areas left to complete for this phase (as at 22.10.18), and through our testing we could confirm the majority of statuses as reflective of the current position. As highlighted in the programme dashboard, the key areas of focus remaining of this phase, is work in relation to effectively capturing the dependencies within the respective service plans, as well as robustly capturing and scheduling key decisions required in advance of 1st April.

Our survey of programme stakeholders demonstrated a spread of views in relation to whether they believed discovery phase activities were broadly complete, although the majority indicated relatively strong agreement to this (*see Appendix B, Q.14*).

Assessment	Gateway Review Area
	The process of producing implementation plans has been undertaken using a robust methodology

Due to the tight timescales of this gateway review, we have not been able to carry out a detailed review of the process undertaken to produce implementation plans, for example speaking with service coordinators and evidencing the full engagement and sign-off process. However, we have liaised with project managers across the three themes responsible for coordinating service implementation plans and looked to evidence the plan sign-off process where possible.

From this assessment, it appears that the process used to produce service implementation plans was practical and involved adequate involvement from relevant stakeholders, including coordinators, working groups and subject matter experts.

Whilst our detailed testing of service implementation plans highlighted inconsistencies in some of the approaches used in documenting plans, these inconsistencies are unlikely to significantly affect the coordination and use of these plans in the nex... phase of the programme.

However, our testing did identify a range of issues that raised concerns regarding the quality control of certain aspects of the plans. Details of the issues identified have been included in the section relating to confidence in implementation plans below.

Assessment	Gateway Review Area
	Plans appear achievable with an appropriate allocation of resources

Due to the fact that certain implementation plans were still being finalised at the time of our review, along with the fact that dependencies and decisions had not yet been fully captured, SWAP has not been able to provide an assessment at this stage. Instead we have placed reliance on the results of our survey of programme stakeholders, reflecting their views.

Our survey demonstrated a high level of confidence in relation to the ability to achieve the drafted plans within the timescales (*see Appendix B, Q.4*).

Our survey also demonstrated a reasonably good level of confidence from programme stakeholders in colleagues' ability to deliver plans (*see Appendix B, Q.7*).

Assessment	Gateway Review Area
	There is confidence that implementation plans will adequately allow for the transition and operation of services from day 1

From our discussions with key programme stakeholders, there was relatively strong confidence that the plans and processes being developed and finalised would adequately allow for the transition and operation of services from day 1.

This view was broadly supported within our survey of wider programme stakeholders, where there was relatively strong agreement to the following three questions:

- You are confident that the Shaping Dorset Council (SDC) programme will be able to deliver a safe and legal Council from 1st April (*see Appendix B, Q.1*)
- Your service / workstream implementation plan (or one you have been involved in) has adequately and thoroughly captured the necessary actions required in advance of 1st April (*see Appendix B, Q.5*)
- You are confident in your colleagues' ability to deliver operational readiness for 1st April (*see Appendix B, Q.7*)

Our high-level assessment of the process of producing implementation plans (see above) noted that this appeared practical I.e involved relevant stakeholders, including coordinators, working groups and subject matter experts, with an intended robust sigh-off process, which we were able to evidence in certain cases. All of the above would contribute to a strong confidence that implementation plans will adequately allow for the transition and operation of services from day 1.

However, our testing undertaken as part of this review, sampled approximately 20% of the overall service implementation plans, including assessing the content and completeness of these plans. From this testing we identified a range of issues with the quality of the plans; a significant proportion of these that had already been through the final sign-off process.

Whilst we appreciate that a programme of this magnitude and pace of the SDC programme, is such that there is an increased likelihood of quality and completeness issues, and to an extent may be part of the overall programme's risk appetite, we felt it important to highlight certain issues that we identified:

- Anomalies were identified in the priorities attached to tasks within the implementation plans. A number of P2-P4 actions appeared to be day 1 critical; and although their implementation date supported this, their priority rating did not
- We noted some P1 tasks within implementation plans that had target dates after April 2019 i.e. June 19, November 19
- A range of P1 tasks were identified within implementation plans with target dates of March 2019 where, in our opinion, actions could or should be taken before this
- Certain tasks within implementation plans did not have target dates attached to them
- The process for compilation of the theme milestone planners was not clear and some anomalies across the three themes was identified - a populated milestone plan was in place for both the people and place themes but was not fully in place for the corporate theme
- We could not obtain clarity that the milestone planner was a summary of the key day one critical tasks for each service – there did not appear to be a robust and consistent methodology for which actions constituted milestones and how these were captured
- There is an inconsistent approach to the level of sign off of the implementation plans with some themes (Place) the sign off being evidenced from Theme Board whereas the People theme is signed off by the co-ordinator
- The template for the implementation plan requires a record of formal sign off. Some plans that have been signed off shows no formal sign off

It should be noted that whilst the quality issues we identified were not necessarily significant on their own, given that these are the plans that will be used to deliver a safe and legal council from day 1, it does raise the risk of certain areas being overlooked, not completed on time, or not adequately implemented.

Assessment	Gateway Review Area
	There is confidence that the programme can progress to the next stage of implementation based on current plans

Our survey of officers demonstrated that there was relatively strong agreement from stakeholders that they felt informed, prepared and confident about moving into Phase 2 Implementation (*see Appendix B, Q.13*).

However, as highlighted in the section above, from our detailed testing of implementation plans, we identified a range of issues in relation to quality, consistency and completeness of plans. Therefore, we would recommend that as part of the closure of discovery phase, it would be prudent to quality check certain aspects of plans, to provide greater confidence that the programme will effectively progress throughout the next stage of implementation.

Assessment	Gateway Review Area
	There is on-going sponsorship and stakeholder support for the programme

Our survey demonstrated that in the majority of questions, there appears to be ongoing stakeholder support and reasonably good confidence for the programme (*see Appendix B for a full list of questions and results of the survey*).

As covered in previous SWAP assurance reports, there is now more established and embedded programme governance arrangements, including clear sponsorship and reporting lines of the programme.

With the acceleration of convergence within the programme, the level of stakeholder support will need to be continually monitored and assessed, to ensure potential risks in relation to staff leaving do not affect operational readiness.

Assessment	Gateway Review Area
	Stakeholders fully understand the programme status and the issues involved

Our survey of programme stakeholders demonstrated generally more agreement that disagreement in relation to understanding of the current status of the SDC Programme and the issues involved (*see Appendix B, Q.2*).

The same applied to stakeholders understanding of the process of escalating an issue for a decision or action, with generally positive agreement (*see Appendix B, Q.9*).

However, lots of comments from the free-text question in the survey indicated that they felt like communication in relation to the programme could be improved.

Assessment	Gateway Review Area
	The necessary skills, experience and resources are deployed on the programme

Through our discussions with programme stakeholders, there were no significant issues raised in relation to skills, experience and resources deployed on the programme. The core programme team is now adequately resourced (*note:- we have not assessed resourcing for convergence activity*). Whilst there has been recent turnover of certain project managers within the programme team, new staff are now in post to address the remaining actions required within the discovery phase.

Our survey of programme stakeholders also demonstrated generally high level of agreement that the necessary skills, experience and resources are deployed on the SDC programme (*see Appendix B, Q.3*).

Similarly, there was also reasonably high levels of agreement with the SDC Programme Team having the ability to facilitate and coordinate operational readiness for 1st April (*see Appendix B, Q.8*).

There was a slightly lower average level of agreement with the confident of stakeholders in the programme having the resilience to overcome any current delays, gaps or issues in advance of 1st April, although again, agreement was overall stronger than disagreement (*see Appendix B, Q.14*).

Assessment		Gateway Review Area
		That there are processes in place to adequately manage risks, dependencies and decisions

Our previous SWAP assurance work has assessed the processes in place to manage risk, dependencies and decisions from a programme perspective. However, this review looked at these areas specifically in relation to the collation and production of service implementation plans.

From this perspective, the processes in place to adequately manage risks, dependencies and decisions are a work in progress and remain to be finalised (*as highlighted in the Programme Dashboard at Appendix A*). Risk management is the most advanced of the three processes, with dependency mapping appearing the least advanced.

Whilst draft documents/ processes exist for all three of the areas, our detailed testing of service implementation plans highlighted inconsistencies between the three themes and incomplete records. From our discussions with the programme team, addressing these areas is likely to be a focus over the next two/three weeks, when further confidence is likely to be available that the processes are robust and complete.

Our survey, however, demonstrated strong agreement regarding stakeholder's clarity of the risks that could impede progress and that the steps necessary to mitigate or reduce these risks were included in the implementation plans (s*ee Appendix B, Q.10*). Similarly, our survey indicated that there was reasonably good confidence that the relevant dependencies had been captured, and that these could be effectively managed to ensure the delivery of plans (*see Appendix B, Q11*).

Assessment		Gateway Review Area
		Target timescales and programme budgets are on track and can be achieved

As highlighted above, the discovery phase section of the programme remains ongoing, although indications are that it is likely to be completed over the next two/three weeks. The original timescales for the completion of this phase was the 30th September. It is therefore well documented that the programme is behind target timescales, although from our conversations with key programme stakeholders, they were confident that this would not significantly impact on the timescales for the next phase of the programme, or the ability to deliver a safe and legal council by 1st April.

The view was also shared in our survey of programme stakeholders, where there was generally a high level of confidence that the programme would be able to deliver a safe and legal Council from 1st April, and that implementation plans were achievable within the set timescales (*see Appendix B, Q.1 & Q 4*).

As part of our review, we briefly reviewed the programme budget arrangements. Whilst we confirmed that the programme budget is currently underspent in terms of spent/ committed amounts, formal programme budget monitoring and estimated year end outturn positions have yet to be undertaken. This is due to commence within the next two weeks, when it will be possible to provide further assurance that the programme budget is on track.

In relation to specific implementation costs contained within the service implementation plans, our detailed testing of plans highlighted that this was sparsely completed, with certain areas identified but costs not yet known. Therefore there is likely to be further work needed to bring together estimated implementation costs across service areas, and ensure that this has been adequately provisioned for within the programme budget.

Shadow Dorset Council

SWAP INTERNAL AUDIT SERVICES
Assuring – Improving – Protecting

Assessment		Gateway Review Area
		That actions have been taken to implement the recommendations of earlier programme assurance reports

As part of this review, we briefly assessed whether actions have been taken to implement the recommendations of our previous SWAP programme assurance reports (actions from any other assurance sources have not been assessed).

From our knowledge of the programme, we were aware the majority of actions from our first assurance report have been adequately taken forward.

The recommended actions from our second, most recent assurance report have either been taken forward or are in the process of being addressed. We would recommend that these are further considered to ensure that risks do not materialise into issues impacting on delivery.

7. Recommendations

- Check back over Priority levels/ target dates contained within implementation plans to ensure they accurately reflect the tasks required for day 1

- Confirm the agreed milestones for operational readiness for each Theme/ Workstream, as well as ensuring/ checking that these accurately reflect a summary of the key tasks within each Theme/ Workstream

- Finalise the work on dependencies, ensuring that all necessary dependencies are captured and agreed, as well as ensuring that these dependencies are clearly communicated/ accessible to programme stakeholders

- Capture all decisions needed, ensuring that these are programmed into the forward plan or a mechanism for ensuring that these will be picked up at the appropriate time

- Ensure service implementation plans are revisited where necessary to fully capture information required, such as relevant policies, or details of implementation costs

- Re-visit/ re-confirm the previous programme assumptions to ensure that these remain relevant and stakeholders are still committed to delivering these within their service implementation plans

- Determine how milestones/ service implementation plans will be managed and monitored going forwards

8. Further Assurance Work Recommended

- Due to the fact that not all discovery phase activities had been completed at the time of this review, as well as time constraints for this review, SWAP has not undertaken an exercise to sense-check whether all areas of service continuity have been considered. We would recommend an exercise is undertaken aimed at providing assurance around completeness.

- Once the upcoming work on capturing and mapping programme dependencies has been completed, we would recommend a more detailed assurance piece around the ongoing understanding, monitoring and actions taken in relation to the dependencies mapped.

- Once is has been determined how tasks within individual service implementation plans as well as Theme milestones will be monitored and reported, we would recommend a more detailed assurance piece in relation to reporting and progress being made with implementation.

|		Scope	Work Breakdown	Detailed plan	Milestones	Risks & Issues	Dependencies	Decisions	Outcomes & Indicators	Governance body in place	Resources in Place
Service Continuity	**WS4 Place**	Yes	Yes	By 26/10/2018 - final 2 implementation plans will be signed off by Matt Piles	Yes	Yes	Drafted - to be added to log Date TBC	Added to Programme Decision Log by 31/10/18	Yes	Yes	Yes
	WS4 People	Incomplete draft	By 25/10/18	By 25/10/18	Yes	By 25/10/18	Drafted - to be added to log Date TBC	By 25/10/18	Drafted – further work required	Yes	Yes
	WS4 Corporate	Incomplete draft	Yes	By 19/10/18	By 16/10/18	Drafted – for sign-off 25/10/18	Drafted - to be added to log Date TBC	By 19/10/18	Drafted – further work required	Yes	Yes
	WS4 Disaggregation & Assets	Incomplete draft	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	By 17/10/18	Drafted – need sign off	Yes	Yes
	WS4 Partnerships, Contracts, Grants, SLAs	Draft for approval	Yes	High Level Plan	Yes	Draft for review 17/10/2018	To be reviewed (18/10/18)	Yes	Drafted – need sign off	Yes	Yes
	WS4 Customer Access	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Drafted – for sign-off 25/10/18	Drafted - to be added to log Date TBC	Yes	Drafted – further work required	Yes	Yes
	WS4 Communication & Branding	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Drafted – for sign-off 25/10/18	Drafted - to be added to log Date TBC	Yes	Drafted – needs sign off	Yes	Yes
Core Workstreams	**WS1 Legal**	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	WS2 Finance	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	WS3 HR & Workforce	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Drafted – needs sign off	Yes	Yes
	WS5 ICT	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	WS6 Information Governance	Yes	Yes	High level plan	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
	WS7 Policies	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes – sponsor agreed	Yes

Q1. You are confident that the Shaping Dorset Council (SDC) programme will be able to deliver a safe and legal Council from 1st April
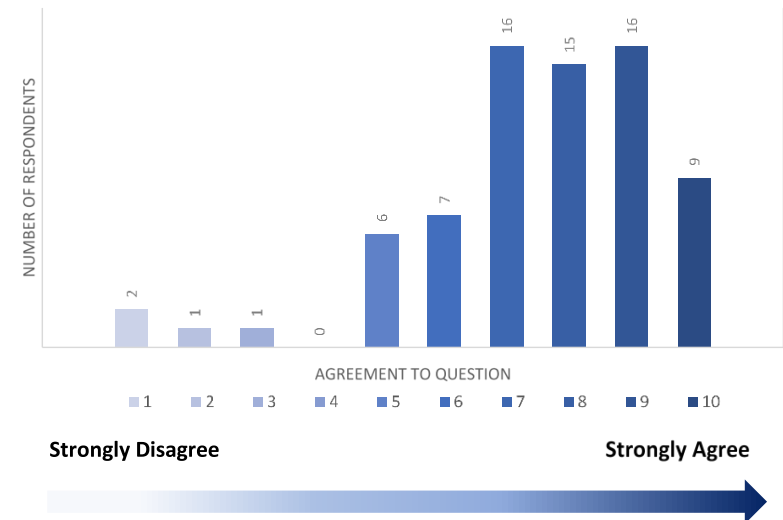

Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree
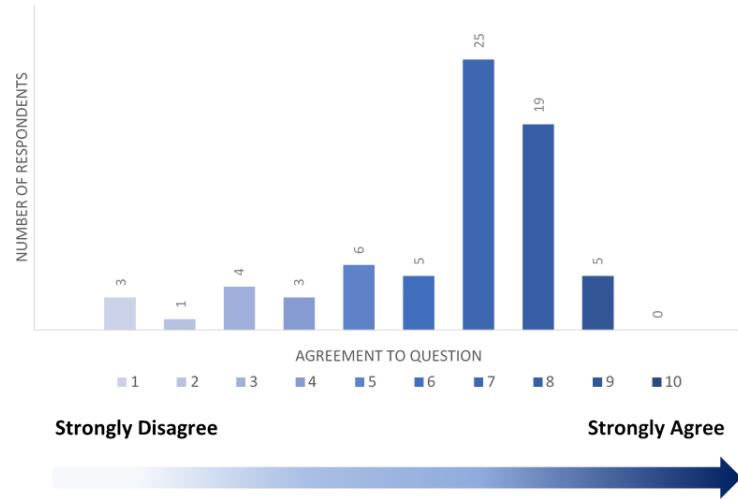
Q2. You feel like you understand the current status of the SDC Programme and the issues involved

Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree
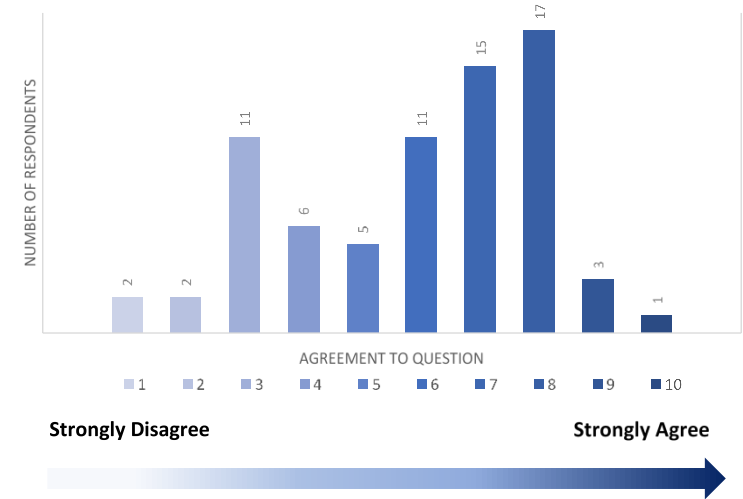
Q3. You feel like the necessary skills, experience and resources are deployed on the SDC programme

Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree
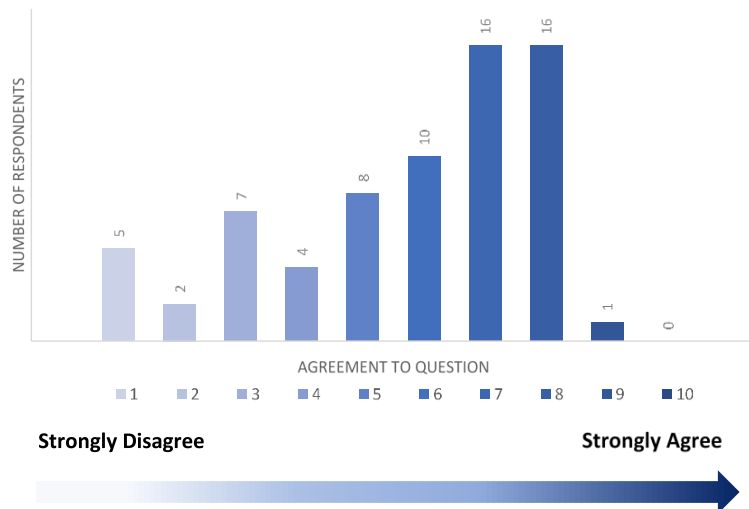
Q4. Your service / workstream implementation plan (or one you have been involved in) is achievable, within the set timescales

Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

Q5. Your service / workstream implementation plan (or one you have been involved in) has adequately and thoroughly captured the necessary actions required in advance of 1st April
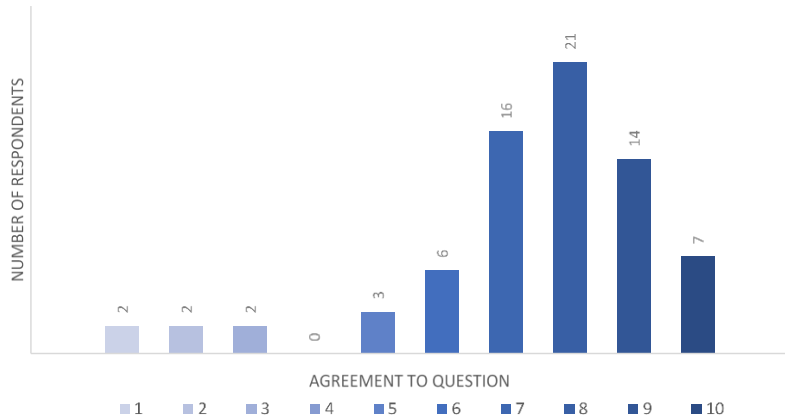
Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

Q6. Any assumptions used in the implementation plans within your area of the programme are documented, realistic and achievable
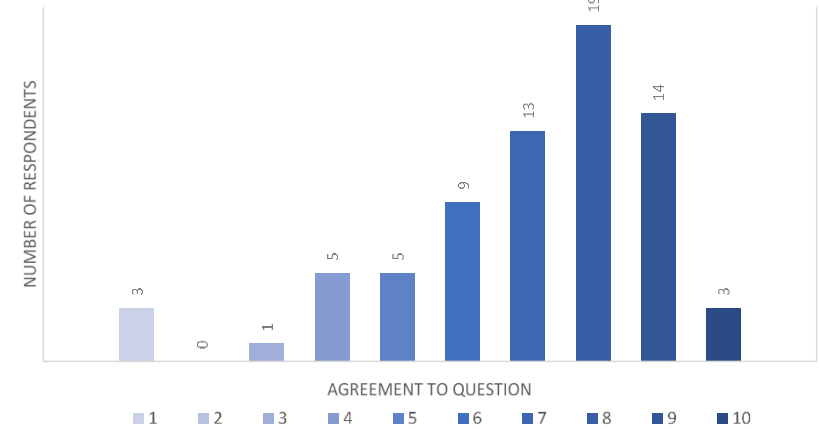
Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

Q7. You are confident in your colleagues' ability to deliver operational readiness for 1st April
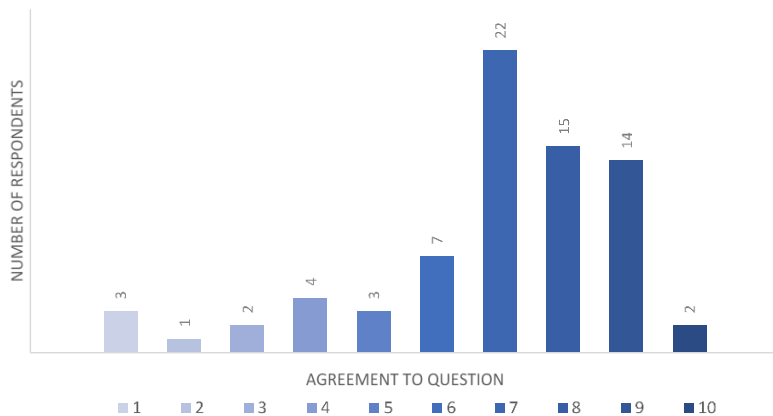
Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

Q8. The SDC Programme Team have the ability to facilitate and coordinate operational readiness for 1st April
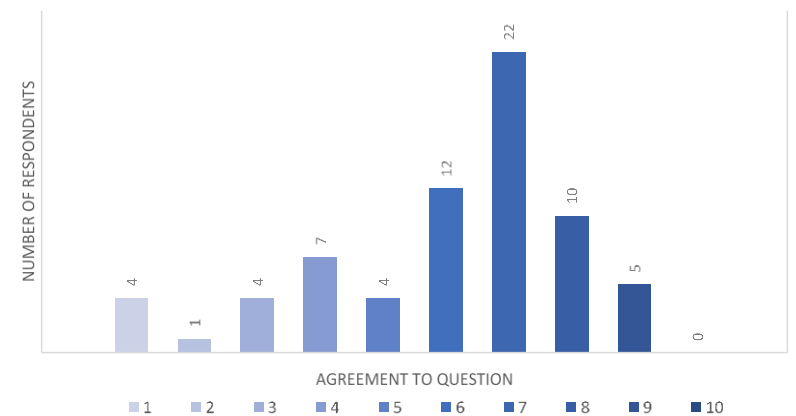
Strongly Disagree   Strongly Agree

Q9. Within your own area of the programme, you are aware of the process of escalating an issue for a decision or action
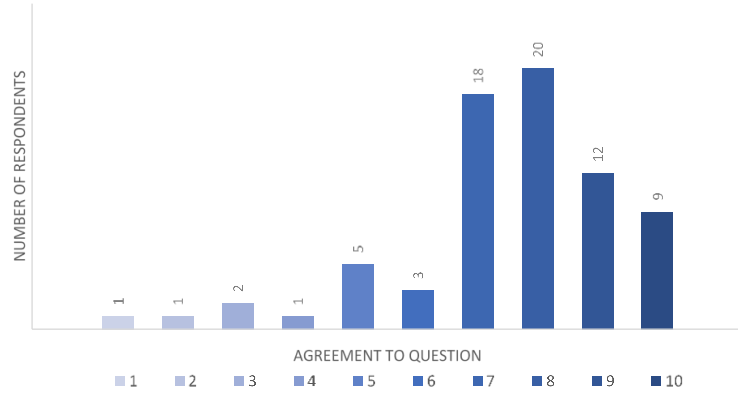
Strongly Disagree — Strongly Agree

Q10. Within your own area of the programme you are clear about the risks that could impede progress and the steps necessary to mitigate or reduce these risks in the implementation plans
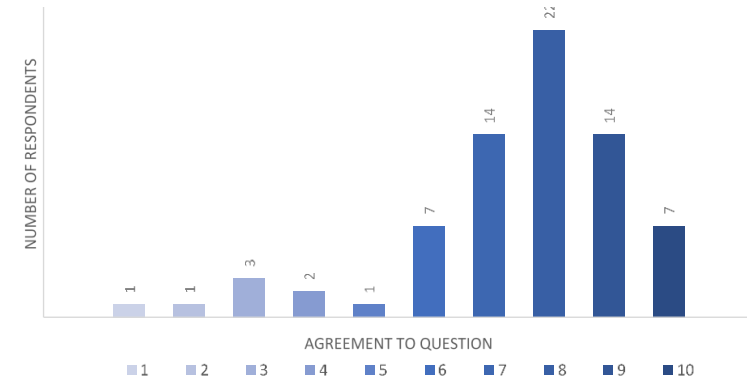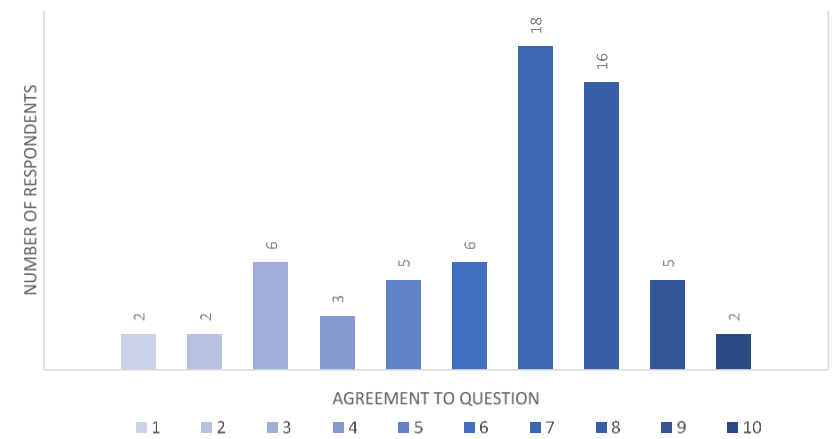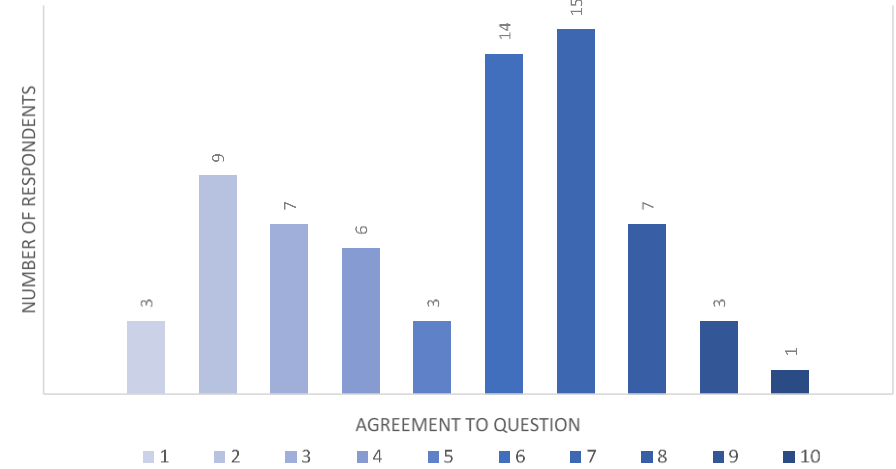

Strongly Disagree — Strongly Agree

Q11. Within your own area of the programme, you are confident you have mapped the relevant dependencies, and that these can be effectively managed to ensure the delivery of plans
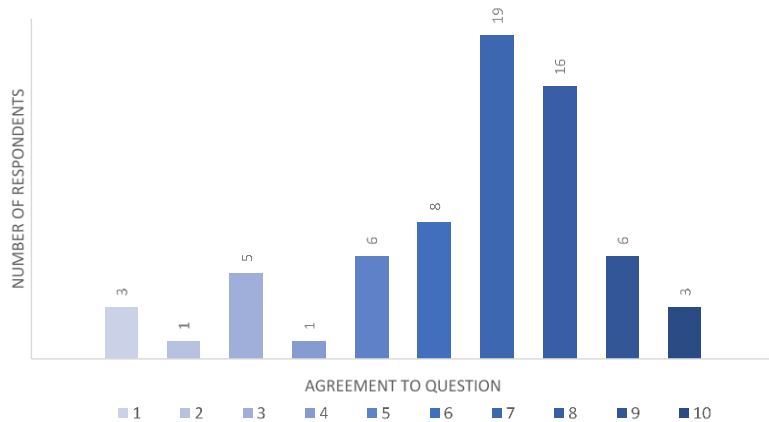
Strongly Disagree — Strongly Agree

Q12. You are confident that Discovery Phase activities are broadly complete, with any outstanding tasks captured and with actions to close them

Strongly Disagree — Strongly Agree

Q13. As Discovery Phase 1 of the programme ends you feel informed, prepared and confident about moving into Phase 2 Implementation
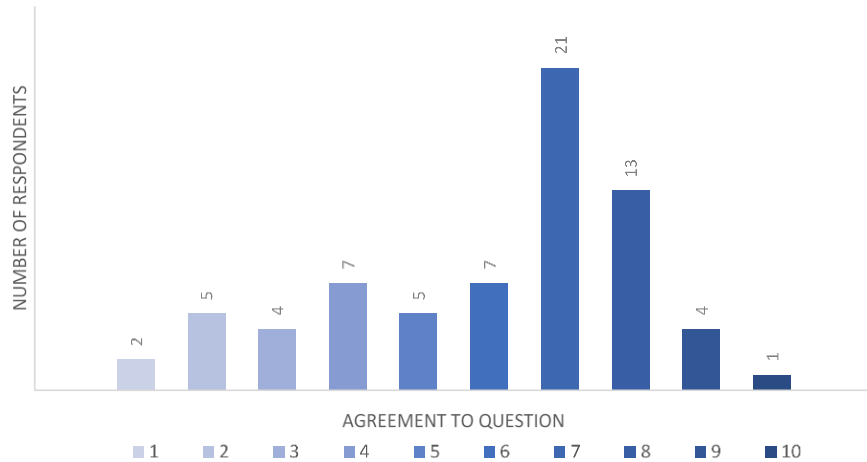
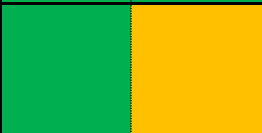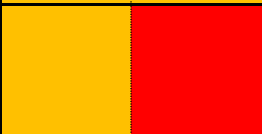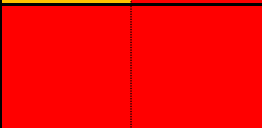**Strongly Disagree**   **Strongly Agree**

Q14. You are confident the programme has the resilience to overcome any current delays, gaps or issues in advance of 1st April

Strongly Disagree   **Strongly Agree**

Gateway 1 Review – Delivery Confidence Assessment Criteria	APPENDIX C

Assessment		Criteria Description
		Successful delivery of the programme to time, quality and cost appears highly likely and there are no notable outstanding issues at this stage that appear to threaten delivery.
		Successful delivery appears probable. However, constant attention will be needed to ensure risks do not materialise into major issues threatening delivery.
		Successful delivery appears feasible but important issues exist requiring management attention. These appear resolvable at this stage and, if addressed promptly, should not present overruns.
		Successful delivery of the programme is in doubt with major risks or issues apparent in a number of key areas. Urgent action is needed to ensure these are addressed, and establish whether resolution is feasible.
		Successful delivery of the programme appears to be unachievable. There are major issues which at this stage do not appear to be manageable or resolvable. The programme may need to be redefined and the impacts of non-delivery in certain areas assessed.

SWAP's Delivery Confidence Assessments in Sections 4. and 6. above reflect:

▪ Evidence of specific programme issues or risks that threaten delivery to time and/or quality, and jeopardise the delivery of successful outcomes

▪ Results from the programme survey coordinated (75 completed surveys returned out of a total of 211, representing a response rate of 36%)

▪ SWAP's professional judgement of the likelihood of the programme succeeding if there is no definitively clear evidence either way

When providing our Delivery Confidence Assessments, SWAP has not considered every scenario that might affect the programme's progress and outcomes, but has looked to reasonably extrapolate from the programme's past progress, current status and documented plans as to whether a successful outcome will be achieved.