Christchurch and East Dorset Councils
delivering services together

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Christchurch Borough Council and East Dorset District Council

Partnership Development Strategy

2014 - 2018

Contents

Introduction

The purpose of the Partnership Development Strategy is to describe how the Christchurch and East Dorset Partnership will change in order to meet the challenges it faces. The strategy identifies our future operating model, and what we must do to deliver that future capability. The strategy creates clarity for our staff, elected members and stakeholders on how we expect the partnership to develop in the coming years.

The strategy concerns itself with the partnership's resources, and how best to deploy those resources to ensure a positive and sustainable future for both councils, and the communities they serve.

The strategy focuses on change, and principally the change that is necessary to take the partnership from its current position, to where it needs to be in the future. Change can present opportunities to deliver improvements to services, but it can also be difficult for an organisation to remain effective during extended periods of change. Consequently, it is vital that such change is planned for and delivered in such a way that everyone can understand why it is happening and how it might affect them, irrespective of whether they are a customer, a member of staff, elected member or any other individual or organisation with a stake in the work of Christchurch and East Dorset councils.

The Progress We Have Made

The Partnership established its first partnership plan in 2012, and that plan identified the challenges facing the councils, and the direction that the organisation should take in order to continue to serve its communities effectively. Work has progressed steadily since then, most notably with the development of the Shared Service Programme. That programme has established joint services, led by partnership managers, responsible for teams of staff working in the interests of both councils. During this period the partnership has:

- Saved over £2 million from joint working

- Maintained the two councils' independence and ability to make their own decisions

- Agreed a joint Corporate Plan

- Agreed a joint Core Strategy

- Maintained service levels and resident satisfaction (Residents Survey 2013)

The Shared Service Programme has achieved a great deal, but as its initial focus of bringing services together draws to a close, our attention must move to ensuring services are operating as efficiently and effectively as possible.

The evolution of the Partnership is expected to involve three phases:

Integration   Efficiency   Transformation

Our work to date has principally taken place within the first phase, concentrating on establishing joint services. Whilst a significant step in itself, it is recognised that opportunities to increase efficiency still exist, and it is the next stages of our programme that will deliver real and lasting transformation of the organisation, and the way it meets its customers' needs. In this sense transformation is interpreted as creating a fundamentally different model of operating than that which existed beforehand. This may relate to the extent to which we provide services, the model by which services are delivered or the organisational structures and partnerships that are responsible for their delivery.

The Challenges We Face

Local government is enduring a prolonged period of austerity, characterised by reduced government funding, increasing customer expectations and changes in policy at a national level. Councils are adapting to a future where cost cutting alone will not be enough. They will need to show greater commercial enterprise and innovation in order to sustain the delivery of services or to invest in their priorities in the future, and the council of the future will be one that is very different from the council of today. Greater self–sufficiency will be a feature of local government looking forward, and it is within this context that this plan has been prepared.

The partnership recognised at an early stage that the squeeze on public sector funding is here to stay, and has planned accordingly. The initial phase of its transformation programme has generated over £2 million of savings from joint working, and this has been crucial in putting the partnership in a good financial position, relative to others. It is nevertheless the case that financial volatility will remain and it is only by planning for the longer term that we will manage its impact in coming years. Our strategy has proven to be successful so far, but it is vital that we continue to make the right decisions now, as they will determine the nature and scale of the challenges we face in the future.

Our Organisational Vision

The transformation of the Partnership is designed to ensure we are able to cope with the challenges we face, and take advantage of the opportunities that present themselves in the future. To create a sense of common purpose for our staff and stakeholders we must identify our organisational vision, and identify the steps necessary to fulfil it over the coming years.

Our organisational vision is to be:

· A customer focused organisation

· Financially sustainable and secure

· Agile and resilient

· Delivering in partnership with public or private sector partners

· Innovative and commercially minded in the pursuit of our goals

· Modern and flexible in our working culture and practices

· Recognised for our ambition and our achievements

Our Operating Model

We have made progress on our initial Partnership Plan objectives but there is more to do. Our operating model in the future will be based on more flexible ways of working incorporating technical innovation and a willingness to work in partnership with both public and private sector partners. This will require a cultural shift across the organisation, as well as new skills and training for our staff.

It is acknowledged that these will be significant steps for our staff, our elected members and in some cases our customers. It is therefore vital that we describe what the organisation will look like and how it will work when we have reached our goal.

New Ways of Working

Our workforce will need to be adaptable to the changing circumstances we face. This might involve acquiring new skills and behaviours, in order to work successfully within a more flexible and modern working environment. In the future our focus will be on the outcomes we produce, not the places we work from.

Staff will work flexibly, whether that is from the office, from home or any other location that allows them to maximise their productivity and contribute to the wider aims of the partnership. In some cases staff will be mobile, fulfilling their functions whilst onsite, using the technology necessary to ensure they can operate efficiently and effectively and in the interests of their customers.

New skills will be required to take advantage of the opportunities that present themselves in the future, and there will be greater focus on commercial skills that help us unlock opportunities and add value. ICT skills will also need to improve to reflect our increasing reliance on technology as a key enabler for future working.

The performance of our staff is vital in delivering our priorities, and we will continually need to be more effective in measuring and monitoring performance. This will also allow us to more successfully develop those individuals with the potential to progress in the organisation, ensuring we retain the skills we need for the future. We will need to sustain effective engagement with our workforce to involve them, and capture their ideas and input into what is happening in the organisation.

Outcomes:

- An adaptable, skilled and highly motivated workforce, working flexibly to meet the requirements of our customers and the needs of the business

- The accommodation requirements for Partnership staff met from our Christchurch offices

- A shared public services centre established in Wimborne, providing partners with the opportunity to deliver joined up services for East Dorset residents

- Effective and ongoing staff engagement on the activities necessary to deliver our organisational vision

- A streamlined, efficient and secure ICT platform that supports the needs of the business and our wider partnership working activity, relying on a small number of technology solutions and effective high quality support

- A commitment to 'digital by default' solutions for meeting an increasing number of our customer's requirements

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Improving Services & Maximising Efficiency

As we continue to make progress on maintaining financial stability for the future, we must think about how we might fund our future aspirations. This will involve considering the services that we wish to invest in, those which we are prepared to disinvest in, or alternatively those which may be better delivered by a third party provider.

Both councils possess a diverse range of assets, some of which may help generate new or improved levels of income, and used innovatively others may provide us with the opportunity to support the partnership's wider strategic objectives. We have not fully evaluated our assets across both councils, or exploited the opportunities they might present us with, and this is a priority.

Although the partnership now benefits from a wide range of joint services, it is clear that opportunities to improve our efficiency further still exist. Detailed analysis is being progressed, and this work is vital if we are to have confidence that our joint services are organised and delivered in the interests of our customers, and around their experience.

Outcomes:

- The delivery of a robust and commercially driven plan for the future management of our assets

- Clarity on the future anticipated delivery models for our services so that we can consider our investment/disinvestment decisions around them

- Improved services based on enhancing our customers' experience, and the removal of waste and inefficiency

Strengthening Local Democracy

As the staff of the Partnership adapt to new ways of working, and the flexibility this demands, it is appropriate to consider how these new arrangements may affect the work of our elected members. The role of members continues to evolve, but at its heart remains the goal of being a successful and effective representative and advocate for constituent's issues and concerns, as well as being able to see the bigger picture and the needs of the wider community. Members join the councils at different times bringing with them different skills and experiences, and it is important that they are provided with the tools and training to adapt and to perform their roles effectively, and this is currently considered an area that requires development.

In a changing technological world the member role is increasingly being influenced by new media and the demands of instant contact, and the expectation of instant response. It is therefore vital that the role of members can keep pace with these changes, and that inevitably requires new skills and approaches.

One of the characteristics of an effective council is a vibrant democratic process, with clarity over responsibility and decision making. This is strengthened further by a challenging Scrutiny function, where decision makers can be held to account. It is considered that further work is required in this regard for both councils, so that the role of scrutiny is strong within the overall context of the council's governance arrangements.

Outcomes:

- A comprehensive training and development programme for our elected Members
- The provision of appropriate technology and support to enable Members to work effectively, flexibly and securely
- An effective Scrutiny function, clear about its role and contribution to the overall effectiveness of the partnership

Developing Partnerships

The commitment of both councils to partnership working is evident, but that commitment is not limited to the strategic partnership between the two councils. The service based partnerships that have developed e.g. Dorset Waste Partnership and Stour Valley Partnership demonstrate the appetite for an operating model that comprises various approaches to the future delivery of services.

It is anticipated that the future will be characterised by further partnership development and collaborative working, where robust business cases exist to support them, and that they may emerge with council, or other public or private sector partners. The key consideration will be to identify the best potential model for achieving the partnership's corporate aims and objectives, and the delivery of cost effective services. The Partnership will remain receptive to such opportunities as they emerge.

To develop future partnership opportunities it is recognised that such arrangements come into place most effectively when potential partners have aligned processes and policies in place. Where this is achieved prior to partnership, the process of establishing a partnership body is made much easier

and costs can be managed more effectively. An example of this is ICT, where adopting a common approach ensures a smoother transition to new partnership arrangements, and allows for the full benefits of joint working to be achieved far sooner than might otherwise be the case.

It is recognised that partnership opportunities cannot always be planned for, as very often they will emerge as a result of new service responsibilities, financial necessity or other circumstances that might uniquely come together at a particular time. It is consequently acknowledged that where partnership opportunities are pursued, that work may affect other aspects of our strategy, including the delivery of other outcomes. In order to remain receptive to such opportunities we must accept this risk and undertake to manage the implications should they arise.

Outcomes:

- The convergence of policies and processes across public services, acting as a key enabler to increased partnership working

- The delivery of further service based and strategic partnerships and collaboration where justified by the application of robust business cases

- The delivery of partnership based services based around meeting the needs of our customers, focusing on their experience rather than the organisation's convenience

Our Transformation Programme

Our programme of change will support our Organisational Vision and the delivery of the Partnership Development Strategy and its agreed outcomes. It will be organised around four key themes.

Our Transformation Themes

New Ways of Working

Activities that support the transformation of our working arrangements to establish a modern and efficient business, flexible to the needs of our customers and our staff.

Improving Services & Maximising Efficiency

Activities that ensure we make best use of our assets and resources, and which ensure we are an efficient, innovative and high quality provider of services to our customers.
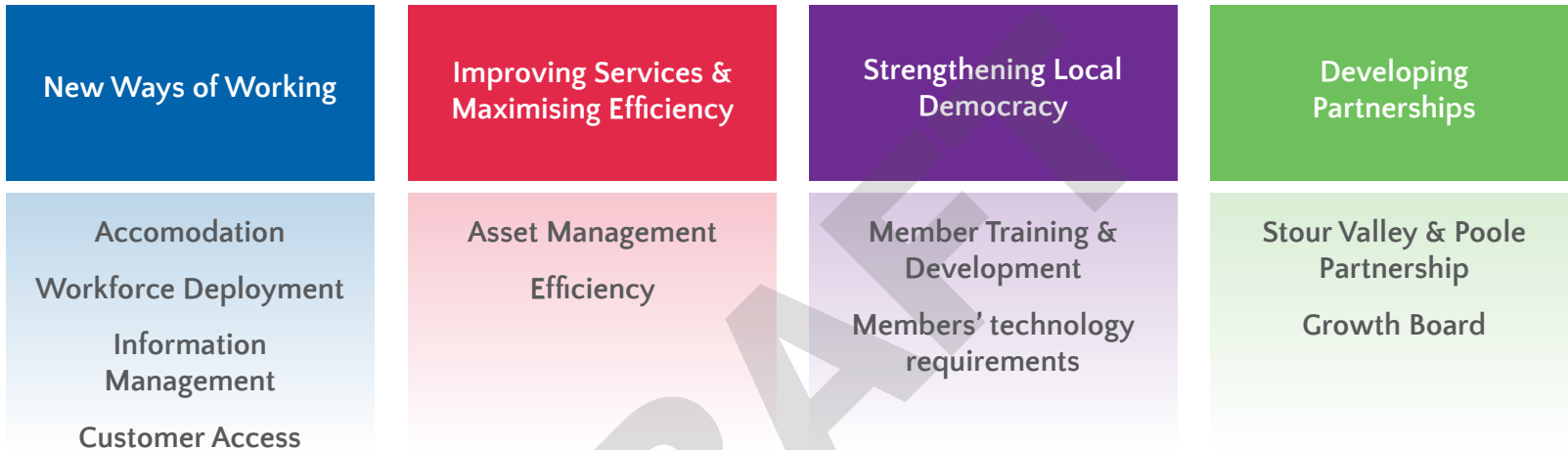
Strengthening Local Democracy

Activities that improve our support to elected members, and which allow members to work efficiently and effectively in the best interests of their communities.

Developing Partnerships

Activities that support our ambitions for working effectively in partnership with other organisations, to realise sustainable cost savings and high quality joined up services.

Transformation Programme
Moving The Partnership Forward

New Ways of Working	Improving Services & Maximising Efficiency	Strengthening Local Democracy	Developing Partnerships
Accomodation	Asset Management	Member Training & Development	Stour Valley & Poole Partnership
Workforce Deployment	Efficiency		Growth Board
Information Management		Members' technology requirements	
Customer Access			

Supporting Activities

People Strategy

Corporate Change Management Policy

Communications Plan

ICT Strategy

Performance Management Framework

Project Descriptions

Transformation Projects	Outcomes
New Ways of Working	
Accommodation	The delivery of the partnership's accommodation requirements, based around flexible working, enabled by appropriate technology
Workforce Deployment	The introduction of working practices and technology to support flexible working styles
Information management	The delivery of digital solutions to the partnership's future management of data and information, such that it supports flexible working and meets agreed security standards
Customer Access	The development of our customer service offering, such that it meets customer need and our commitment to providing and moving customer contact to digital solutions where possible
Improving Services & Maximising Efficiency	
Asset Management	The development of innovative and commercial ways of managing and exploiting our assets to create increased income opportunities
Efficiency	The streamlining of processes involved in managing services, such that the customer experience is improved and financial savings can be realised
Performance Management Framework	The mechanism by which the organisation plans things that it needs to do, and monitors performance, individually and collectively, against its commitments.

Transformation Projects	Outcomes
Strengthening Local Democracy	
Member Training and Development	The delivery of training and development requirements for Members, that underpin the partnership's commitment to effective political leadership
Members' technology requirements	The delivery of technology solutions that meet the needs of members in the context of our commitment to new ways of working
Developing Partnerships	
Stour Valley & Poole Partnership	The development of the existing Stour Valley Partnership to include the Borough of Poole
Growth Board	A Member led steering group overseeing the development and delivery of the Partnership's work to deliver improved economic growth and prosperity
Supporting Activities	
People Strategy	The delivery of the policies, procedures and behaviours than underpin our commitment to the value of our workforce, including approaches that will establish the partnership as an employer of choice and capable of attracting and retaining high quality talent.
Corporate Change Management	The processes and methodology that underpins the way the partnership manages change and delivers projects and programmes successfully
Communications Plan	The delivery of planned communications that support the effective delivery of the transformation programme
ICT Strategy	The delivery of flexible, reliable, secure and value for money ICT solutions based around the requirements of the business
Performance Management Framework	The mechanism by which the organisation plans things that it needs to do, and monitors performance, individually and collectively, against its commitments.

Managing the Process of Transformation

Each project will be developed and managed in accordance with the partnership's agreed Programme and Project methodology. This will ensure consistency of approach and encourage a wider understanding across the organisation of what the programme is designed to do, and why. This will also ensure staff, elected members and other stakeholders can easily follow our journey and see where we are at any particular moment.

Managing change is a resource hungry activity, and the capacity required to deliver the various projects and outcomes referred to in this plan is significant. Consequently, progress will be made in line with our implementation plan timescales, and project work will be primarily led by the partnership's Organisational Development team, working closely with staff from across the partnership as required. We are committed to transferring and developing skills as part of this process, and so it is anticipated that our overall change management skill base will increase as we progress.

Effective communications will underpin the delivery of the programme, ensuring that all stakeholders can follow its progress. Branding as shown in this plan will be used to support the circulation of updates and key messages around the programme and its constituent projects and programmes.

Timeline for Delivery

The delivery timescales for projects and programmes can only be identified once they have been fully scoped and their outputs agreed. It is nevertheless possible to provide an indicative timeline for the work involved in the Transformation Programme, which shows the periods over the coming years in which we anticipate project and programme activity to take place. This provides a clearer picture of how long we expect our overall process of transformation to take place, subject to there being no further changes in the strategic context in which we are working, eg, government policy, legislative change etc..

Transformation Programme	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
New Ways of Working				
Accommodation	████	████	████	
Workforce Deployment	████	████	████	
Information management	████			
Customer Access	████	████		
Improving Services & Maximising Efficiency				
Asset Management	████	████	████	
Efficiency	████	████	████	
Strengthening Local Democracy				
Members' Training & Development	████			
Members' Technology requirements	████			
Developing Partnerships				
Stour Valley & Poole Partnership	████	████		

24

Monitoring Performance

Progress on the projects contributing to the delivery of the Transformation Programme will be reported quarterly to the Corporate Team, and subsequently to the Partnership Board. This will capture progress against agreed timeframes and milestones. The ultimate success of the programme will be determined by whether we have achieved the agreed outcomes contained in this strategy, and this will be measured by a combination of direct and proxy performance measures, as appropriate.

Progress on individual projects and programmes will be scrutinised from time to time by the partnership's scrutiny process, which may result in recommendations to council committees.

Individual projects and programmes will be led by a Corporate Team sponsor and depending upon their size may have a nominated Member on their project board.

Further information on the partnership's approach to project and programme management is available by contacting the Organisational Development team.