

Cabinet

7 November 2023

Our Future Council

For Decision

Portfolio Holder: Cllr L Beddow, Culture and Communities
Cllr J Haynes, Corporate Development and Transformation
Cllr G Suttle, Finance, Commercial and Capital Strategy

Local Councillor(s):

Executive Director: A Dunn, Executive Director, Corporate Development

Report Author: Lisa Cotton; Steven Ford; Nina Coakley
Job Titles: Corporate Director Customer and Cultural,
Corporate Director Transformation, Innovation and Digital,
Head of Change

Tel: 01305 221762 / 01305 225484

Email: lisa.cotton@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk;
steven.ford@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk

Report Status: Public

Brief Summary:

To provide Cabinet with an update on current progress of the Our Future Council transformation programme, to seek their endorsement of the work so far and approval to initiate the next phase of work to support in addressing the councils' financial challenges as set out in the Medium Term Finance Plan (MTFP).

Recommendation that Cabinet:

1. Acknowledges and endorses progress made on the Our Future Council programme, Phase 1, described in section 1.4.
2. Approves continued expansion of Phase 1 to deliver identified and further savings across the organisation aligned to the activity described in section 1.4.
3. Endorses initiation of Phase 2 of Our Future Council programme aligned to and in support of the ongoing budget process and medium-term financial strategy.
4. Acknowledges existing governance in place, to oversee the programme as it develops, through the council's performance board and Our Future Council programme Steering Group and officer board.

5. Agrees to receive an update report on Phase 2 progress in early 2024.

Reason for Recommendation:

Dorset Council has a proven track record of successfully implementing transformative initiatives, leading to significant savings and improved efficiency since its establishment in 2019. Through our previous endeavours, we have developed the necessary tools and framework to support further change.

Starting from Spring 2023, Dorset Council has embarked on an ambitious programme called 'Our Future Council' putting our customers first and exploring new ways of working. The primary goal of this programme is to bring about sustainable change and create a streamlined, digital and unified customer experience, resulting in better outcomes at a lower cost.

The council must now respond and move beyond convergence and comprehensively review how the council is organised. Central to this transformation is a renewed emphasis on our priorities, customers, and communities, with a resolute commitment to placing people and outcomes above our internal organisational boundaries and bureaucracy.

1. Report

- 1.1 The challenges of local government finances are becoming ever more acute, and the current financial challenges that Dorset Council is facing are set out in the linked cabinet papers outlining our current financial position and the medium-term financial plan. These highlight that there is a need to develop a strong, planned approach to transformation, both in terms of how the council operates and what models of delivery it develops during the coming years.
- 1.2 The purpose of transformation is to fundamentally change and or redesign systems, processes, and services across the organisation to:
 - achieve measurable improvements in efficiency, effectiveness, and customer experience.
 - support the council in delivering a balanced budget.

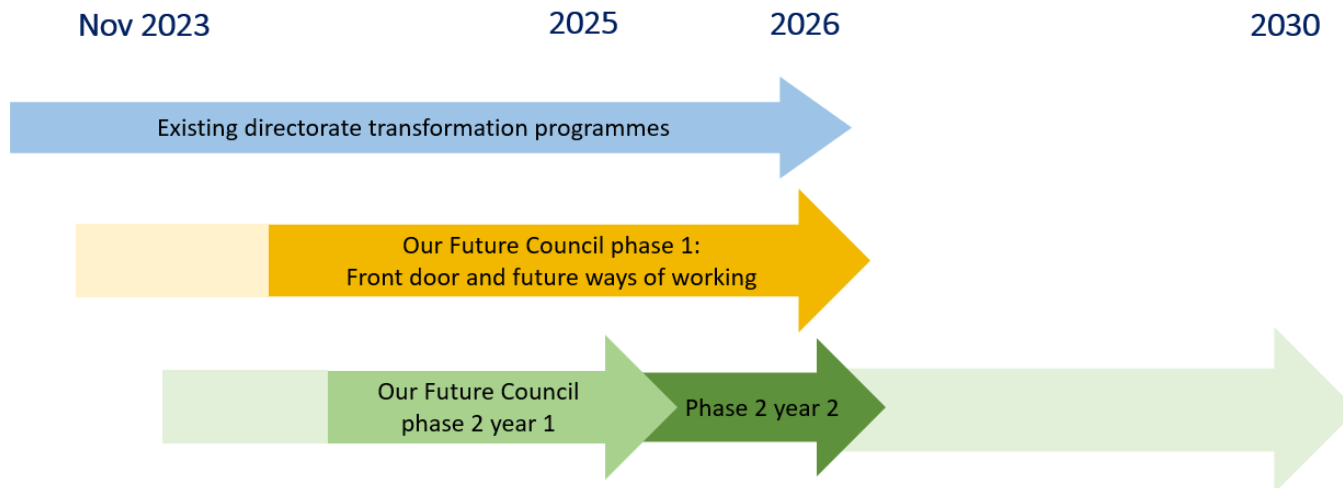
Since 2020 the council has delivered a successful transformation programme delivering £13.6m across the first two years. This work will continue and is projected to deliver a further £19.9m between 2023 and 2026 through existing transformation programmes. Progress of this transformation activity was reported to [Cabinet on 20 June](#).

However, in December 2022, the council recognised that current transformation ambitions required acceleration to increase the scale of efficiencies and financial return to support a balanced budget, and commissioned work to accelerate that transformation through the Our Future Council programme.

1.3 The Our Future Council programme is designed to ensure that existing transformation in directorates is aligned to council-wide transformation. The programme is comprised of two key phases:

- Phase 1: Front door and ways of working
- Phase 2: Organisational and service redesign

Diagram 1



1.4 Our Future Council Phase 1

This work is the next step in the council’s successful whole council transformation programme and accelerates delivery of the council ambition to be a ‘more responsive, customer focussed council’. This will deliver whole organisational ‘one council’ change by taking a customer focussed approach to redesigning services.

The council will improve the customer experience and increase efficiency for how our teams operate through rapid expansion of its use of digital tools. Further efficiency in how we work will be created as functions are consolidated and aligned. This will include providing customers with simple ways to apply for a service, pay for a service, book appointments, follow up on a case or enquiry and keep track of progress through developing our ‘one council front door’ approach.

Unlocking these benefits will require the council to:

- invest in, reuse and exploit new digital tools and ways of working.
- develop an application portfolio management approach to delivering future technical need.
- change the way we work including the embracing the potential for joining up services/functions to achieve economies of scale.

- improve the way we use data to provide a greater level of business intelligence and customer insight to better manage demand and improve services.
- provide further assurance of accessibility and inclusion.

The programme will deliver across three workstreams:

- contact points and demand.
- transactional interactions.
- better ways of working.

The programme has identified initial net savings of £800,000 per year to be delivered by March 2026 and anticipates expanding on these savings as discovery and redesign work continues with each service.

1.5 **Our Future Council Phase 2**

Informed by insight gathered in phase 1, and building on existing transformation activity, phase 2 will identify further opportunities for how we operate in the future.

This will include:

- establishing the future vision for how Dorset Council can evolve, working in partnership with our communities and partners.
- redefining the way the council operates to maximise value and efficiency whilst maintaining the council's priority as a 'more responsive, customer focussed council'.

1.6 **Programme Governance**

To support the delivery of transformation activity, planned and future development, we will continue to use the existing Our Future Council programme governance with member oversight through the Steering Group and Performance Board.

An established programme team will oversee all operational requirements with regular reporting continuing through to the member and officer Steering Group consisting of Cabinet Leads and Senior Leadership Team. Governance will further develop as the programme expands into Phase 2.

2. **Financial Implications**

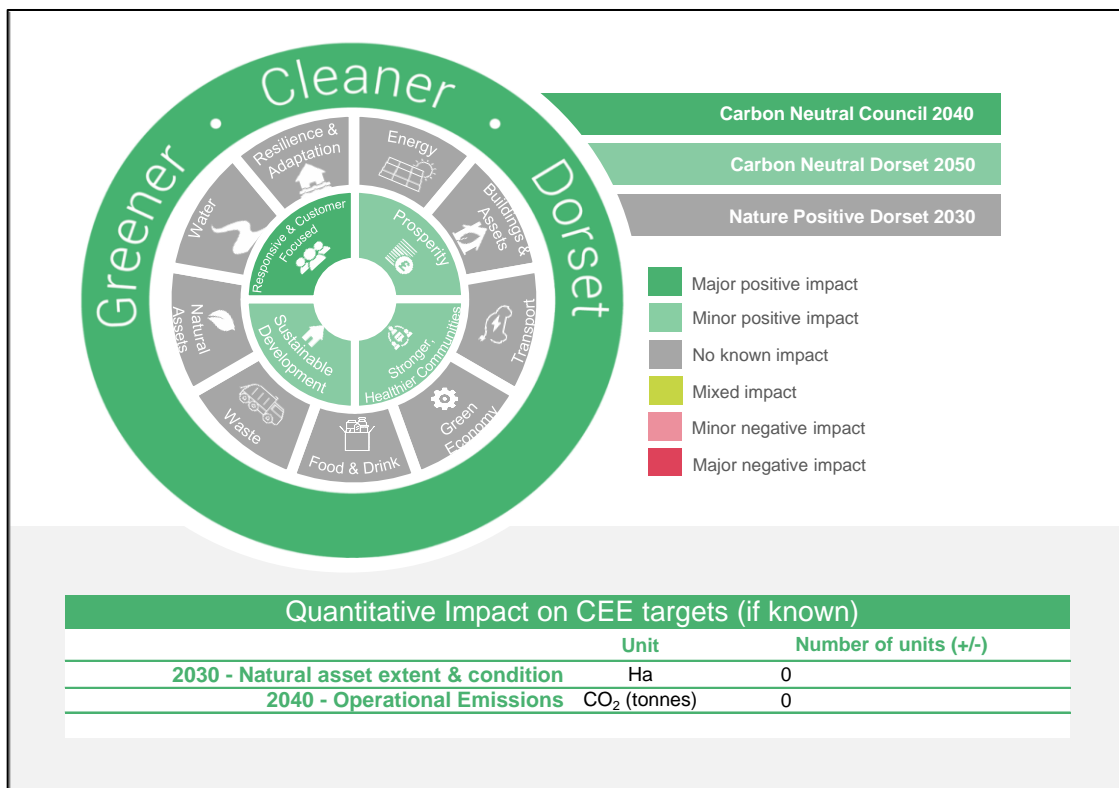
The council is experiencing financial pressures due to the increases in demand, the increase in inflation and the lack of structural funding from central government that recognises the unique challenges of our demography and rurality. The current financial position is highlighted in the two linked cabinet reports.

The delivery of phase 1 and 2 of the Our Future Council programme will contribute to closing the budget gap outlined in the Medium-Term Financial Plan.

The change required to deliver the fundamental service reviews and end-to-end service transformations, underpinned by appropriate digital solutions and ICT systems which will deliver against new design principles and operating model, will be significant. These challenge longstanding operational practices and cultures, and as such need investment up front. For each service this will require the development of business cases to set out the investment required and the expected return which will help close the funding gap.

3. Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Implications

A decision wheel to consider the impact of this decision has been completed.



Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Strategy Commitments	Impact
Energy	No known impact
Buildings & Assets	No known impact
Transport	No known impact
Green Economy	No known impact
Food & Drink	No known impact
Waste	No known impact
Natural Assets & Ecology	No known impact

Water	No known impact
Resilience and Adaptation	No known impact

Corporate Plan Aims	Impact
Prosperity	minor positive impact
Stronger healthier communities	minor positive impact
Sustainable Development & Housing	minor positive impact
Responsive & Customer Focused	strongly supports it

Recommendations	Responses -will this be incorporated into your proposal? How? And if not, why not?
Energy	
No recommendations found for this category	
Buildings & Assets	
No recommendations found for this category	
Transport	
No recommendations found for this category	
Green Economy	
No recommendations found for this category	
Food & Drink	
No recommendations found for this category	
Waste	
No recommendations found for this category	
Natural Assets & Ecology	
No recommendations found for this category	
Water	
No recommendations found for this category	
Resilience & Adaptation	
No recommendations found for this category	

Furthermore, the natural environment, climate and ecological decision process will apply to all projects that come forward for prioritised delivery. This is in keeping with the key natural environment council priority. The programme will continue to consider the impact

of any change delivered on these commitments. Each project and programme undertakes an impact review during the understand innovate stages of our change management framework.

4. **Well-being and Health Implications**

The council's transformation programme continues to deliver change to improve the way that the council provides services, including supporting residents with their specific needs. This programme will accelerate this and will redesign the way services operate their front facing offer and reduce manual and processing duplication. This will provide an improved offer to residents, who will find it easier to get the help they need and for employees who will benefit from increased efficiency.

5. **Other Implications**

N/A

6. **Risk Assessment**

6.1 **HAVING CONSIDERED:** the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: High

Residual Risk: High

The delivery of phase 1 and phase 2 concurrently across an initial 2-year period presents a high risk for the organisation.

- **Lack of ownership:** there is a risk that the benefits won't be fully realised if the change is not driven across the organisation.
- **Pace:** there is a risk of error and negative impact on the financial outcomes required by delivering whole council change quickly.
- **Skills and capability:** there is a risk that the requisite skills will not be easily accessible from internal resources (change, back office and service based) and that this will slow implementation.

To ensure that the programme operates safely and within risk appetite, the council will adopt the corporate risk framework which is aligned to council priorities. The risk scoring methodology will therefore be in line with the corporate risk register. Additionally, existing corporate and transformation change capacity and capability will be aligned to these focus areas, along with the temporary resources required to accelerate delivery.

7. **Equalities Impact Assessment**

The council is committed to ensuring fair and accessible services for everyone in Dorset through the delivery of services and improvements as set out in our transformation and

council plan. Where the council will make changes to a service or offer, an equality impact assessment will be undertaken to ensure due regard of the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty. An equality impact assessment is therefore undertaken for each change made because of transformation or broader change activity; these are usually identified by project and completed by the service, supported by the project delivery team.

8. **Appendices** – none attached.

9. **Background Papers**

[Transformation annual report 2022/23](#)