

Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee

20 November 2025

Statement received from UNISON

Back in January 2025 UNISON raised concerns to Cabinet about the pace of cuts and significant job losses proposed, the risks of AI/Automation without clear implementation details, the lack of an equality impact assessment in regard to how residents and customers, particularly those that are digitally excluded and that these cuts would likely impact low paid workers female workers more. Despite this the programme went ahead with the first phase commencing in July.

The consultation was a very difficult process for all involved and those impacted felt there was a lack of engagement, unclear rationale and concerns over service failure given that the Council is not technologically ready and the proposed job cuts. At the start of the process too much emphasis was given to PWC's recommendations without proper engagement with the unions and frontline staff. During this phase of reorganisation, staff tasked with designing and implementing OFC themselves were reorganised creating a double bubble of stress and work demands. Careful consideration needs to be made on the impact of work-related stress on all employees going through future reorganisations to facilitate OFC.

While we are pleased that the pace has been slowed, we are still concerned about potential service failure especially where new technology has yet to be embedded where cuts have been made. For example, due to the cuts in Business Support, Social Workers and Family Workers have been advised that their (already unmanageable) workloads will be increasing as they will now need to take on more administrative duties. In Customer Services the 20% cut in staffing will lead to extended wait times for those contacting the Council while we have no new technology in place. We have yet to see an EQIA on how the new direction of OFC will impact residents of Dorset.

We cautiously support the new direction OFC is taking and glad that our views which we expressed very clearly back in January have been taken on board. It is a shame our concerns were not actively addressed earlier as this would have saved employees a lot of undue stress and anxiety and potential service failure while we wait for new technology to be embedded.