Place and Resources Scrutiny
25 June 2026
Transformation update
For Review and Consultation

Cabinet Member:
Cllr B Wilson, Transformation, Customer & Workforce

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Statutory Authority:

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1. **Executive summary**

1.1 This report provides a year one update to the Place and Resources Scrutiny Committee on the Our Future Council programme, following the previous scrutiny update in November 2025 and the Cabinet report in April 2026. It sets out progress against the programme's objectives and savings expectations, what has been delivered, what is live now, and the key priorities, benefits, risks and dependencies for 2026/27. The report responds directly to key lines of enquiry outlined by the Committee.

1.2 Our Future Council remains the main focus of this report. However, one of the clearest lessons from year one is that lasting change cannot be delivered through separate programmes working in isolation. The council is therefore increasingly bringing transformation activity together as one cross-council portfolio so that governance, resources, scheduling, investment and delivery can be aligned more effectively. This has been possible as a result of the establishment of the Transformation Management Office (TMO) which was a key milestone from year one of Our Future Council.

1.3 This reflects Dorset Council's wider journey to become a modern, sustainable unitary council, now outlined in the recent cabinet paper, with clearer alignment between purpose, priorities, decision-making and delivery, and means this report must now also provide a relevant public account of the council's wider transformation journey.

1.4 Key progress in establishing the foundations for this wider transformation portfolio includes:

- Launch of the Customer Hub and Business Support Hub, establishing important building blocks for the council's new operating model and wider transformation portfolio.
- Establishment of the Transformation Management Office (TMO), bringing together delivery capacity and creating a stronger cross-council approach to portfolio management, oversight and coordination.
- Procurement of a new ERP (HR, Procurement and Finance) system as a key enabling technology to support more consistent processes, stronger data and longer-term embedding of change across the council.
- Establishment of a programme of work to codesign how we work differently to better meet the needs of communities across Dorset. This will be delivered 2026-29, working in partnership with ward councillors, town and parish councils, the voluntary and community sector, and other statutory partners.
- Strengthened governance, commercial controls and commissioning, alongside redesign of the senior leadership structure, creating stronger foundations for coordinated delivery across the transformation portfolio.

1.5 Early benefits include, financial savings, improved customer access to advice, guidance and services through the customer hub, reduced duplication, strengthened financial control, and increased organisational capacity for change. The transformation portfolio is also already delivering significant financial benefit, including workforce efficiencies, reduction in third-party spend, rationalisation of systems and technology. As at March 2026, this includes:

- £5.71m of savings delivered in 2025/26, including £4.0m from effective management of third-party spend
- A target of £9.43m savings in 2026/27, with £2.03m already delivered against this target

1.6 The Our Future Council programme has also adapted its delivery approach based on learning from year one, with a stronger emphasis on:

- phased and integrated delivery of technology and workforce change
- a product and service-led delivery model, focusing on change in whole services rather than separate projects, with teams working together to improve how services work for residents, bringing technology, processes and people changes into one place
- a more consistent approach to benefits tracking and reporting

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- Consider and comment on progress made since the previous scrutiny update in November 2025
- Note the transition to an aligned whole-council transformation portfolio, which includes Our Future Council, and how this supports future delivery, oversight and public reporting as part of the council's wider journey to become a modern, sustainable unitary council
- Note the benefits realised to date and the approach to benefits tracking
- Review delivery priorities and key risks for 2026/27
- Agree to continue receiving six-monthly progress updates

3 Reason for the recommendation(s)

Regular scrutiny supports transparency, accountability, and effective oversight of a complex and high-value transformation programme. These updates enable Members to track delivery, investment, benefits and risk against plans and financial expectations, and to understand how the Our Future Council programme is now being taken forward through a more aligned cross-council portfolio. This helps ensure that reporting remains relevant to the council's overall transformation activity and forms part of a wider system of reporting on Dorset Council's journey towards becoming a modern, sustainable unitary council.

4 Background and context

4.1 The Our Future Council programme was established to modernise services, improve customer and employee experience, and support long-term financial sustainability. In its first year, the programme focused on putting key foundations in place for change, including the Customer Hub, Business Support Hub and Transformation Management Office, alongside early learning about the pace, complexity and capacity needed to deliver transformation at scale. All of these functions are now live and operational.

4.2 As set out in the April 2026 Cabinet report, the council is now moving on from treating transformation as a number of separate programmes and is increasingly bringing activity together as one cross-council portfolio. This includes Our Future Council, but also wider transformation across Adults, Children's, Communities, Economy and Environment and central corporate services. In plain terms, this means planning and delivering change in a more connected way across the council, so that Dorset Council can increasingly operate as one organisation rather than as separate parts working in isolation.

4.3 This alignment reflects a clearer understanding that change must be managed as a system. Bringing programmes together enables more joined-up governance, resource planning, scheduling and decision-making across the portfolio. It strengthens visibility of the investment required to embed change over time, across digital, service redesign, workforce and wider system change. It also creates a clear line of sight between the Council Plan, the council's vision for a modern, sustainable unitary, and delivery in practice, supporting more coherent reporting to Members on progress and outcomes.

4.4 Recent delivery has included redesign of the council's strategic leadership arrangements, strengthening joined-up leadership, accountability and coordinated delivery. The next phase will extend this to the wider leadership structure, embedding new ways of working and supporting delivery of the transformation portfolio.

5 Responding to Committee key lines of enquiry

5.1 The number of employee positions removed

As part of transformation activity during Year 1 (2025/26), a total of 49.21 FTE posts have been removed, reflecting changes linked to the establishment of the new operating model, including the Customer Hub, Business Support Hub and associated service changes.

The original Our Future Council business case (January 2025) set out an indicative reduction in organisational size over three years, based on assumptions about how savings would be realised as services were redesigned.

Delivery in Year 1 has focused on establishing the foundations required to support transformation at scale, including the new operating model, strengthened governance and the creation of the Transformation Management Office. This has ensured services have remained stable while building the capacity needed to deliver change effectively.

As the programme moves into full service redesign, workforce efficiencies will continue to be delivered, but through a broader and more sustainable approach. This includes managing natural turnover and vacancies, redeploying staff into priority roles, investing in skills and capability, and reducing manual activity through automation and improved processes.

This represents a shift from measuring change solely through reductions in post numbers to a wider focus on reducing overall organisational cost and improving productivity. It is not currently possible to quantify the full impact of vacancy management and redeployment during Year 1 in a consistent way; this will be incorporated into future reporting.

While FTE reductions to date are not following the initial indicative trajectory, this reflects a deliberate decision to prioritise establishing the operating model and delivery capacity required to deliver transformation safely and sustainably. The programme is now well positioned to deliver sustained financial savings, improved services and a more flexible and skilled workforce as Dorset Council progresses towards becoming a modern, sustainable unitary council.

5.2 Progress against original plan

The original Our Future Council business case set out a three-year programme to:

- deliver a new operating model
- implement transformational service change
- achieve financial savings for long-term sustainability
- reduce overall organisational size over time
- embed new ways of working supported by technology, data and workforce development

Progress in Year 1 has focused on establishing these foundations, including delivery of the Customer Hub and Business Support Hub, creation of the Transformation Management Office, strengthened governance, and mobilisation of key enabling programmes such as ERP.

In line with learning from delivery, the approach has evolved from the original assumptions in the business case. Early activity has included a “lift and shift” of some services into the new operating model to maintain continuity, alongside a deliberate focus on managing risk, supporting staff through change, and ensuring the council has the capacity and capability to deliver transformation effectively.

This reflects feedback from members, colleagues and partners, and a recognition that sustainable transformation requires both structural change and the ability to deliver and embed that change at pace.

The programme is now moving into a phase of full service redesign, where the majority of financial and service benefits will be realised. This will include deeper changes to how services operate, increased use of automation and data, and further embedding of new ways of working across the organisation.

The overall ambition and financial targets set out in the business case remain in place. The pathway to delivery has evolved to ensure that benefits are achieved in a way that is sustainable, safe and aligned to the council's ambition to become a modern, sustainable unitary council.

5.3 Total cost to organisation so far in comparison to budgeted

The council approved an updated business case to invest £34.81m in the transformation programme. The first request for investment from this was in October 2025 where £12.40m was approved followed by April 2026 approval for a further £7.27m taking the total approved investment to £19.67m as shown in the summary table below.

Category	Internal capacity £m	External partner & data £m	ERP partner £m	Tech cost £m	Licensing £m	Upskilling / training £m	Redundancy / Costs £m	Total £m
ERP: HR, Procurement & Finance	0.20	2.28	2.10	0.35	1.13	0.25	0.00	**6.31**
Contact Centre	1.11	2.10	0.00	0.00	0.99	0.25	0.00	**4.45**
TMO & automation	2.44	0.00	0.00	0.13	0.00	0.00	0.00	**2.57**
Digital initiatives	0.31	0.15	0.00	1.88	0.00	0.00	0.00	**2.34**
Strategic partners	0.00	0.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	**0.50**
Workforce	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3.50	**3.50**
Total	**4.06**	**5.03**	**2.10**	**2.36**	**2.12**	**0.50**	**3.50**	**19.67**

As at year end 2025/26 £2.27m has been spent, with a further £0.13m as at May 2026, the forecast spend for 2026/27 is £12.91m as shown in the summary table below:

Project / Service Delivery Summary	Total Funding Agreed	Outturn 2025/26	Actuals 2026/27	Forecast 2026/27	- Over + Under Allocated
ERP	6.31	0.21	0.09	7.06	-0.96
Contact Centre	4.45	0.42	0.00	0.78	3.25
TMO, Automation, OFC & Other Costs	8.91	1.65	0.04	5.07	2.20
Total	**19.67**	**2.27**	**0.13**	**12.91**	**4.49**

More detailed information is shown below for the Contact Centre:

Contact Centre	Total Funding Agreed	Outturn 2025/26	Actuals 2026/27	Forecast 2026/27	- Over + Under Allocated
Internal Capacity	1.11	0.00	0.00	0.30	0.81
External Digital	2.10	0.31	0.00	0.00	1.79
Implementation Partner	0.00	0.10	0.00	0.39	-0.50
Technology costs	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Licensing	0.99	0.00	0.00	0.08	0.91
Upskilling / Training	0.25	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.25
Redundancy / Change Costs	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total Contact Centre	**4.45**	**0.42**	**0.00**	**0.78**	**3.25**

More detail information is shown below for Transformation, Automation, OFC and costs:

TMO, Automation, OFC & Other Costs	Total Funding Agreed	Outturn 2025/26	Actuals 2026/27	Forecast 2026/27	- Over + Under Allocated
Internal Capacity	2.75	0.04	0.04	0.51	2.20
External Digital	0.65	0.00	0.00	0.65	0.00
Implementation Partner	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Technology costs	2.01	0.00	0.00	2.01	0.00
Licensing	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Upskilling / Training	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Redundancy / Change Costs	3.50	1.61	0.00	1.89	0.00
Total Other Costs	**8.91**	**1.65**	**0.04**	**5.07**	**2.20**

The ERP program shown below is forecasting a slight over allocation of funds to 2026/27 at £0.96m. As the ERP programme develops, these future costs being forecast will be refined and updates to investment profiles will be requested through the six-monthly Cabinet updates.

ERP	Total Funding Agreed	Outturn 2025/26	Actuals 2026/27	Forecast 2026/27	- Over + Under Allocated
Internal Capacity	0.20	0.00	0.00	0.85	-0.65
External Digital	2.28	0.07	0.09	3.46	-1.25
Implementation Partner	2.10	0.00	0.00	1.10	1.00
Technology costs	0.35	0.00	0.00	1.00	-0.65
Licensing	1.13	0.14	0.00	0.65	0.34
Upskilling / Training	0.25	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.25
Redundancy / Change Costs	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Total ERP	**6.31**	**0.21**	**0.09**	**7.06**	**-0.96**

5.4 Safeguards in place to ensure service continuance

- A phased delivery approach has been adopted to reduce disruption, with investment and benefits reviewed regularly to ensure control and continuity.
- Initial changes prioritised ‘lift and shift’ of some teams, alongside the full redesign of other teams into the new hubs, maintaining service delivery while creating a platform for redesign.
- Strong governance and oversight is been in place, with monitoring by Cabinet, Scrutiny and Audit & Governance, alongside risks tracked through the Corporate Risk Register and overseen through governance structures.

5.5 Employee wellbeing data and additional support provided to support people through change

- The programme has placed a greater emphasis on workforce readiness following feedback from year 1 and has undertaken more engagement and design sessions with staff over the past 6 months. This is part of our renewed commitment to provide staff with the skills, capacity and support to adopt new ways of working.
- Investment includes training, upskilling and leadership development, alongside additional workforce change capacity to support staff through transition.
- Staff are supported through structured engagement, consultation and change leadership sessions, with Trade Unions and employee networks actively involved.
- Transformation is designed to improve the employee experience, with automation and process simplification freeing up time for higher-value work and reducing manual effort.

5.6 Automation and AI tools integrated to date

AI and automation are being adopted in line with the council’s policy and ethics framework, ensuring their use is transparent, proportionate and focused on improving outcomes for residents while maintaining appropriate governance and oversight.

- Intelligent Virtual Agents are live within the Customer Hub, handling initial contact for selected services and improving access through faster responses and reduced wait times. Implementation has been deliberately phased, allowing the council to learn from customer interactions and refine the approach as it scales.
- AI-enabled meeting tools are in use, significantly reducing administrative time. Feedback from employees has evidence the positive experience of using Minute AI and Copilot including impressive productivity improvements.
- Automation tools such as Power Automate are in place improving prioritisation and responsiveness, such as escalation tools for urgent work.
- Wider investment includes automation platforms and AI capability such as robotic process automation which is being piloted in specific use cases. This includes communication mining to better manage unstructured email contact to high demand services
- Emerging ERP capability will further enable the use of AI and automation by providing improved data quality, standardisation and system integration, supporting more advanced use cases over time.

- Automation and AI are already improving productivity and customer experience, with clear evidence of reduced manual workload and faster service.

5.7 ERP progress update

- The ERP system, Oracle Fusion, has been successfully procured, with a system integrator also appointed.
- The programme has established governance, resourcing models and implementation prerequisites, reducing delivery risk.
- Progress over the past 6 months includes cleansing of data in current system of record SAP, confirming list of systems that interface with SAP, confirming the requirements for the future System of record across all directorates, recruitment of Business backfills to enable release of key SME’s into the ERP Programme of work. , process mapping and mobilisation of the Programme team, and creating the first Statement of work for the ERP Delivery partner , ensuring readiness for implementation.
- ERP is a key enabler of long-term benefits, providing more consistent processes, improved data and reporting, stronger financial management and workforce insight. Its successful delivery is critical to sustaining savings and scaling transformation benefits over time.
- Additional specialist capability has been brought in to strengthen delivery and de-risk implementation, ensuring the programme is set up for successful delivery of long-term benefits.
- ERP is on track, with foundations in place and clear line of sight to improved data, efficiency and financial control.

6 Benefits realised across the transformation portfolio

For financial benefits see Section 9.

6.1 Our ‘one council’ approach is delivering tangible benefits for residents, communities, employees and the council, alongside creating the conditions for further impact in 2026/27 and beyond.

6.2 The council is delivering significant transformation while continuing to strengthen its data foundations. Progress has been made in establishing delivery structures and enabling services, although data maturity is still developing.

6.3 As a result, reporting currently combines narrative, case examples and emerging quantitative evidence. This reflects the stage of the council’s transformation journey, with further improvements already underway. Work to strengthen data maturity is a core part of the transformation portfolio. This includes developing a cross-council benefits framework and scorecard to improve consistency, ownership and transparency in how benefits are defined, tracked and reported.

6.4 Progress to date includes:

- a structured benefits framework aligned to transformation objectives, council plan priorities and the council’s long-term vision

- early definition of benefit categories, baselines and ownership
- initial design of a benefits scorecard to support consistent reporting across the portfolio
- strengthened governance arrangements for benefits tracking and oversight

6.5 As this work develops alongside enabling technologies, including the ERP system, reporting will become increasingly data-driven and comparable over time.

6.6 Next steps include:

- embed the cross-council benefits framework across all transformation activity
- establish clear baselines and targets for priority programmes
- roll out the benefits scorecard to support consistent reporting to senior leadership, Cabinet and Scrutiny
- strengthen data collection within services to improve evidence of impact
- align benefits tracking more closely with financial planning and Medium Term Financial Plan assumptions
- progress enabling technology, including ERP, to improve data quality and accessibility
- build capability across services to strengthen ownership and use of data in decision-making

Progress across the Our Future Council programme remains on track with the route to achieving benefits defined. With delivery models, governance and benefit tracking in place, there is growing confidence that these changes will lead to improved services, better use of resources and sustained financial benefits.

<table>
<tr><th>Area</th><th>Delivered in the last 6 months</th><th>Benefit</th></tr>
<tr><td>Customer Hub & Business Support Hub</td><td>New customer hub delivered with phase 1 of specialist customer teams integrated. Phase 2 design work initiated with further teams to integrate to the hub.</td><td rowspan="2">More joined-up services, faster response times, reduced duplication.
Stronger delivery oversight, better prioritisation, improved use of resources.
£0.71m recurrent benefit 2025/26 (part year effect) of 49.21 full time equivalent and £1m vacancy management delivered via Directorates.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Transformation Management Office (TMO)</td><td>New coordinated delivery model implemented. Single transformation portfolio now in place.</td></tr>
<tr><td>HR and Finance system (ERP)</td><td>Procurement of a new system. Programme team in place.</td><td>More efficient processes, better data and reporting, less manual work.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Strategic & enabling</td><td>New senior leadership team in place. Wider leadership review initiated. New internal governance model developed.</td><td>Clearer decision-making and accountability, more coordinated delivery.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Commissioning & Procurement</td><td>Strengthened commercial controls in place.</td><td>Improved contract management and commissioning outcomes
£4m benefit delivered in 2025/26</td></tr>
</table>

Community partnerships	Community clusters developed and conversations planned. Pride in Place programme in place.	Services aligned to local needs, stronger partnerships, focus on prevention.

6.7 Adult Social Care

Transformation work in Adults is helping to improve services and make them more financially sustainable. This is making a difference by:

- Making adult social care more financially sustainable: changes to charging and support for people who fund their own care are helping make services more affordable in the long term. This is underpinned by two projects developing option appraisals for introducing a charging model for Careline monitoring and SIM costs, and arrangement fees for self-funders receiving council support; both are subject to engagement and consultation.
- Focusing more on prevention and independence: regular care and support reviews are ensuring that people receive the right level of support at the right time, reducing reliance on long-term care. An example is the Working Age Accelerator programme, which takes a strengths-based, outcomes-focused approach to reviewing care plans and supports individuals to build independence and achieve their goals, using the principles of least restrictive practice, positive risk-taking and better use of technology.
- Making better use of council services and buildings: investment in reablement services is helping people regain independence and move through the system more smoothly. A key example is the development of the former Sidney Gale Care Home site in Bridport into a dedicated reablement centre for older people, supporting residents discharged from hospital or recovering from a fall or illness to regain confidence and skills, reducing time spent in hospital and providing tailored rehabilitation to help them recover more effectively and return home sooner with appropriate support.

Overall, this work is helping the council step in earlier, reduce demand for more complex support, and create more sustainable care services.

6.8 Children Services

Work in Children's Services is focused on improving outcomes for children and making services work better together across the whole system. This is making a difference by:

- Improving support for children with additional needs: New digital tools for Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) will help services work together better and reduce delays. As demand grows, these tools will simplify the process, reduce admin work and make it easier for families and professionals to understand and contribute to plans. This should lead to clearer, more consistent and higher-quality support.
- Helping services spot problems earlier: The Schools Inclusion dashboard helps identify children who may need support sooner. Schools can now see key information about pupils, including whether they are receiving support or have a social worker. This makes it easier for professionals to share information, build relationships and act early.

- Providing clearer direction and faster progress: The Continuous Improvement Plan helps teams focus on what matters most and make improvements more quickly. It links closely to wider council priorities and is managed through the Transformation Management Office (TMO), giving clear direction and supporting ongoing improvement.
- Improving how organisations work together: Work to respond to national SEND reforms is strengthening partnership working across services. A draft SEND Reform Plan has been developed with partners. The aim is to create a more joined-up, inclusive system that helps children and young people stay safe, feel supported and achieve positive outcomes.

Overall, this work is helping teams respond earlier, work more collaboratively, and deliver improved outcomes for children.

6.9 **Economy and Environment directorate (previously the Place directorate)**

Work is helping improve how we plan infrastructure, deliver services and support the local economy and environment. This is making a difference by:

- Using better data to make decisions: improved information on mobile coverage and council assets is helping target investment more effectively. Improved information on mobile coverage is helping the council identify connectivity gaps and target interventions more effectively. This supports place-based delivery, including mobile connectivity solutions linked to local events and wider infrastructure planning. An example of this is the mobile connectivity solution being provided as part of the Weymouth Seafood Festival.
- Improving infrastructure and connectivity: work on digital and physical connections is helping tackle barriers to growth and service access for residents and local businesses. This includes action to connect premises previously omitted from full fibre works, alongside wider digital infrastructure activity embedded in the council's place transformation programme. An example of this is facilitating full fibre connectivity for 10 affected premises who had been omitted from full fibre works previously.
- Making frontline place services more efficient: the transformation portfolio includes a new Asset Management Database and digital tools for highways activity, including Mobile Highways Inspections and a Highways Engineers Mobile Solution, to support better planning, coordination and maintenance of roads and infrastructure. This helps strengthen service standards and create a more joined-up approach to managing place assets.
- Supporting regeneration and economic growth in key areas: Weymouth 2040 is included in the transformation portfolio as a place-based regeneration programme. The January 2026 budget report included £450,000 to support delivery of regeneration, clean energy and economic growth priorities and to help attract inward investment.
- Improving value for money through digital redesign: a new Household Recycling Centre booking system, which went live to residents in early 2026. The system has enabled improved demand management, reduced operational pressures on sites, and ensured capacity is prioritised for Dorset residents. By introducing a booking requirement linked to residency verification, the council will continue to reduce cross-border usage, which has historically created additional cost pressures without corresponding funding. The redesign also improves the user experience,

offering a simple, accessible way for residents to plan visits, minimise queuing, and receive clearer guidance on site usage.
- Ensuring new technology is used safely and effectively: New policies, such as for drones, are helping identify innovation opportunities. This includes the potential use of AI to improve the resident's experience with planning applications.

Overall, this work is helping create better places, support local businesses, improve how services are delivered, and build stronger foundations for future regeneration, infrastructure planning and digital innovation.

6.10 **Housing, Communities and Prevention directorate (with an update on housing transformation to be included in the next update report following changes to directorates in May)**

Work in Communities is helping people get more involved and play a bigger role in shaping local services. It focuses on three main areas:
- Working with communities: making sure decisions are made closer to the people they affect, and working in partnership with local communities. This approach was set out in the March Cabinet paper *Working with Communities*.
- Prevention: focusing on tackling issues early, before they become more serious and more costly to deal with.
- Our workforce: building the skills, confidence and capacity of our staff, and making Dorset Council a good place to work.

This is making a difference by:
- Creating local community clusters across Dorset, where "Community Conversations" will take place over the summer and autumn. These will bring together councillors, town and parish councils, community groups, health services and other partners to share local experience, test ideas and shape how decisions can be made more locally.
- Developing new ways for communities to take the lead locally. In Littlemoor and Broadwey, work is underway to set up a "Pride in Place" board. A chair has been appointed and board members are being finalised. The board will help lead local decisions on prevention, regeneration and building trust in local decision-making.
- Investing in staff capability. A programme is underway to build skills in neighbourhood working, including around 50 staff taking part in a Community of Practice (supported by New Local), and secondments from services into the community team
- Starting design work to improve how the council works with communities. This includes looking at how local data is used, how community spaces can be better used, and how council processes (such as commissioning) can better support joined-up, responsive working.

Overall, this work is helping shift towards services that are more locally led and shaped by communities.

6.11 **Central and enabling services (representing the Assurance, Resources, Chief Executives Office and Modernisation and Customer Delivery directorates)**

Work delivered through the central transformation team, including the Our Future Council programme, is improving how the council operates and supports services. This is making a difference by:

- Making the most of new technologies: new technology is making our services easier to access for customers. Intelligent Virtual Agents are in place and are supporting customers to complete three types of waste request. This had reduced wait times for customers and released time for contact centre team members to support more complex calls.
- Improving how we support service delivery: a pilot of new AI tool to capture meeting minutes and notes has continued to progress at pace. This is enabling staff to focus on higher-value work by reducing the manual effort required to capture notes and minutes. *“Using this tool has meant that I have been able to set up and complete the majority of 30 meetings every week - on my own. Our team was previously five people and now it is just myself”*
- Improving how information is managed and shared: website improvements are continuing to make information clearer, more accessible and easier to use. An example of this is work has included parking queries such as questions about permits or chasing challenges to parking fines. This has included improvements to website content and services, introducing a redesigned parking ‘contact us’ page, developing a calculator to give customers clearer expectations on response times for parking ticket challenges, and moving the healthcare permit application process online. Early indications suggest these changes are helping to reduce the need for customers to contact the Parking team or Customer Services for support.
- Improving how support services work behind the scenes: the Business Support Hub is making processes more consistent and reducing duplication, so work gets done more quickly. Alongside this, the transition of Adults Business Support and HR/Payroll teams has been delivered through a lift-and-shift approach, maintaining continuity of service while establishing a platform for future improvement. An example of this is the Power Automate Escalation Tool, which automatically detects urgent emails and sends alerts via Microsoft Teams, helping teams prioritise and respond faster. Another example is Self-Service Meeting Management, which uses Microsoft 365 tools to standardise booking and diary management, reducing admin burden and improving coordination across the organisation.

Overall, this work is starting to make a real difference and we can see clear progress. While some changes are still underway, the groundwork is now in place to continue improving services and strengthen the council’s finances in the years ahead.

7 Learning and changes in approach

7.1 Building on learning outlined in the November 2025 report, the council has updated how it delivers transformation to make it more practical and effective. Key changes include:

- Introducing a phased, joined-up approach: changes to services are now planned and delivered with greater focus on people and process change alongside the technology needed to support them

- Focusing more on people and readiness for change: more attention is being given to making sure staff have the capacity, skills and support to adopt new ways of working
- Using a more flexible, team-based way of working: mixed teams, called product teams, are working together to design and test improvements quickly, using small-scale pilots before wider rollout
- Improving oversight and tracking of benefits: governance and reporting have been strengthened so progress and benefits can be monitored more clearly.

Overall, these changes recognise how complex transformation is and are helping the council manage risk while continuing to make progress.

7.2 The programme has made significant progress since the previous scrutiny update, moving to a more integrated and coordinated approach to transformation.
While early benefits are being realised, the next phase will be critical in embedding change, scaling delivery, and realising the full financial and service improvements set out in the business case.

7.3 Ongoing scrutiny and oversight will remain essential to ensure delivery remains on track and aligned with council priorities, and to provide a clear and consistent system of reporting to members on the council's wider transformation journey.

8 Alternative options considered
Not applicable – update report only.

9 Legal considerations
Not applicable – update report only.

10 Financial implications

10.1 This section summarises the financial position and implications of the programme as previously agreed by Cabinet in April 2026.

10.2 The transformation portfolio represents a significant, multi-year investment designed to deliver both service improvement and financial sustainability. Cabinet previously approved an overall investment of £19.67m across 2025/26 and 2026/27, including an initial £12.4m agreed in October 2025 and a further £7.27m approved in April 2026.

10.3 This investment supports key enabling programmes including:
- ERP (HR, Procurement and Finance transformation)
- Customer contact centre and digital platforms
- Transformation Management Office and automation capability
- Workforce change and additional delivery capacity
- Digital innovation initiatives across services

10.4 The April 2026 Cabinet report noted that forecast spend for 2025/26 is lower than originally profiled, primarily due to:
- reprofiling of ERP delivery following revised implementation timelines and resourcing approach
- phasing of contractual commitments such as licensing and partner costs

10.5 From a scrutiny perspective, this highlights the importance of ongoing monitoring of both expenditure and delivery timelines to ensure that planned benefits are still realised in line with the Medium-Term Financial Plan.

10.6 Delivery of these financial benefits is closely linked to the successful implementation of service redesign, workforce change, and enabling technology. As such, there is a continued need for robust benefits tracking and reporting and alignment between transformation activity and financial planning.

10.7 The transformation portfolio is already delivering significant benefit, including workforce efficiencies, reduction in third-party spend, rationalisation of systems and technology. As at March 2026, this includes:

- £5.71m of savings delivered in 2025/26, including £4.0m from third-party spend reduction
- A target of £9.43m savings in 2026/27, with £2.03m already delivered against this target

10.8 While early savings have been achieved, the Cabinet report also highlights risks to full delivery, particularly in relation to:

- Achieving planned third-party spend reductions due to external economic pressures affecting cost assumptions e.g. fuel
- The dependency on successful implementation of major programmes such as ERP

10.9 The development of a cross-council benefits framework and scorecard, as referenced in the Cabinet report, is intended to strengthen this by providing greater transparency on benefit realisation, ownership, and progress.

10.10 In summary, while the transformation portfolio is beginning to deliver financial benefits and efficiencies, a significant proportion of investment and savings remains dependent on future delivery. Ongoing scrutiny will therefore play a critical role in ensuring that investment remains aligned to priorities and that financial benefits are realised as planned.

11 Natural environment, climate & ecology implications

Not applicable – update report only.

12 Well-being and health implications

Not applicable – update report only.

13 Other implications

None

14 Risk implications

The programme adopts a phased, risk-based approach to mitigate disruption and ensure service continuity. Risks are tracked through the Corporate Risk Register and reviewed regularly by governance bodies. The current risk level is moderate due to the complexity of transformation, with residual risk expected to reduce as enabling technologies and workforce adaptations are implemented. Strategic risks are included in the Dorset Council Corporate Risk register.

15 15 Equalities

Not applicable – update report only

16 16 Appendices

None

17 17 Background papers

Transformation update to Cabinet April 2026

Modern sustainable unitary paper to Cabinet May 2026

Policy for the use of AI, Automation & Algorithmic Data Processing in Dorset Council - Dorset Council

18 Report sign-off

This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s)