



ST HELENS
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cabinet

23rd September 2020

Report Title:	One Council Modernisation/LGA Update
Cabinet Portfolio	Corporate Services, Estates and Communications
Cabinet Member	Councillor Kate Groucutt
Exempt Report	No
Reason for Exemption	N/A
Key Decision	No
Public Notice issued	N/A
Wards Affected	All
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Borough priorities Please mark X for any priority supported by this report	Ensure children and young people have a positive start in life	X
	Promote good health, independence and care across our communities	X
	Create safe and strong communities for our residents	X
	Support a strong, diverse and well-connected local economy	X
	Create a green, thriving and vibrant place to be proud of	X
	Be a modern, efficient and effective Council	X

1. Summary

This report provides an update on the delivery of the One Council Programme, which incorporates the actions and recommendations from the LGA Peer Review and Culture Review carried out in early 2019

2. Recommendations for Decision

Cabinet is recommended to:

- i) note progress to date**
- ii) to note that a more robust programme management approach is being developed to drive forward improvements in line with Reset and Recovery ambitions.**
- iii) note that as part of the above, key measures of success and performance improvement, supported by an evidence base, will be identified (answering the ‘so what’ question)**
- iv) Agree the governance arrangements**

3. Introduction and context

- 3.1 An LGA Peer Challenge was carried out in early 2019, which highlighted that the Council had identified a need to change and modernise to meet future challenges but that it faced some significant issues. The LGA Peer Challenge made several recommendations in its report to which the Council developed an action plan including consideration of wider issues of modernisation that the Council had identified.
- 3.2 Progress has been variable to date due to an absence of effective programme management and governance which is now being addressed, the recommendations of which are contained in this report at paragraph 8.0. In addition, it is now timely to integrate the ambitions outlined in the One Council Programme with the council’s Reset and Recovery programme of work as a result

of the COVID-19 pandemic. To support this, additional peer support has been agreed with the LGA and will take place on the 28th September in an agreed Recovery and Renewal Panel. This panel session provides an opportunity for the Leader, Cabinet Member - Corporate Services, Estates & Communication, Chief Executive and the Assistant Chief Executive to come together, virtually, with peers to:

- Reflect on what the Council has achieved and learnt in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Discuss with peers the challenges and opportunities COVID-19 has presented for the Council and local area.
- Consider the steps the Council wishes to take towards recovery/renewal.

The session will help to identify a series of actions the Council may wish to take as well as identifying further support and good practice from across the sector. The sessions will be co-facilitated by;

- Cllr Sir Stephen Houghton (Leader – Barnsley Council)
- Sarah Norman (Chief Executive – Barnsley Council)
- Claire Hogan (LGA Principal Adviser) and Dan Archer (LGA Programme Manager).

The LGA key recommendations were: -

- Ensure that improving Children’s Services remains a clear corporate priority
- Enhance senior capacity at Assistant Chief Executive (ACE) level to support the change programme and improve co-ordination of political and managerial decision making
- The Chief Executive should work with other senior officers to develop a more distributed leadership model which empowers Strategic Directors and senior managers (within a framework of clear accountability) and decreases the current over reliance on the Chief Executive
- Provide a development programme for both members and officers to improve joint working, better understanding of their respective roles and reset the Councils culture to drive positive change and ensure it addresses the issue of poor member behaviour.
- Overhaul performance and financial reporting arrangements to provide clearer information to support better informed decision making and performance monitoring
- Ensure constructive performance challenge and robust performance management across the organisation
- Ensure the review of the Councils strategy for the refresh of the Council Plan engages with members, officers, partners and residents and leads to an expression of its vision and priorities for the Borough that is widely owned and clearly understood
- As part of the regeneration strategy, develop a programme to support adults in work to develop their skills to progress their careers and earnings, enabling them to take advantage of the full range of opportunities presented by jobs growth in St Helens

- Develop a capital and investment funding strategy that takes account of the Councils priorities, including its regeneration and economic investment goals, and ensure this is linked to the Medium-Term Financial Strategy
- Develop and invest in a more pro-active external communications strategy – to promote good news, mitigate and manage bad news and reinforce the St Helens narrative – to be owned and delivered across all council services
- Develop and invest in a comprehensive approach to organisational development, including strengthening internal communications and engagement
- Develop clear priorities for modernisation followed by a roadmap for delivery with sufficient resources to ensure success.

3.3 The LGA also provide the following wider local government perspective on modernisation as part of their best practice guidance notes and advice to the sector:

Councils are responsible for delivering an estimated 80 per cent of public sector transactions in their areas, they also have a particular obligation to design their services in the most accessible, economic and ‘user-friendly’ way, and a vital role to work closely with other public, private and voluntary sector partners to ensure that local services are built around the citizen rather than the needs of service deliverers.

At a time when public services face fundamental challenges, technology and digital tools and approaches are central to achieving all of this. For councils and their partners, these tools can enable:

- *a deeper understanding of local patterns of need and interaction with government, allowing resources to be managed, planned and directed to where they will have the greatest impact*
- *more effective management of demand – for example, enabling user self-service and supporting peer to-peer advice-giving and assistance via social media*
- *more reliable, speedy, and precise handling of routine, repetitive tasks – allowing costly and scarce professional expertise to be targeted at cases which need judgement or at new and unexpected situations*
- *faster access to, and sharing of, data between councils, customers, and partner organisations, avoiding the need to collect the same information many times over and saving time on research and information collation*
- *new ways of working that potentially reconcile the goals of providing a better quality of customer experience while cutting costs.*

3.4 On 17 July 2019 a report entitled One Council – A Modernisation Programme for St Helens Council was considered and approved by Cabinet.

4.0 Characteristics of the One Council modernisation programme

The One Council modernisation programme was planned to be an organic programme to include:

- Developing a partnership of trust between Councillors and officers in delivering against the Corporate Plan as determined by the Administration and approved at Cabinet and Council
- Continuous service improvement for the benefit of the resident and customer
- All employees working together in collaboration to improve services and performance
- Providing a culture that spans both the Council and its partnerships.
- A focus on greater collaboration between officers and departments within the Council
- A programme which helps develop confidence in officers to identify issues and to do everything they can to resolve those issues in a collaborative way with colleagues
- Developing a way of thinking that motivates employees
- Developing a way of behaving that meets the Council's values and behaviour expectations
- Developing self-belief in officers both individually and as an organisation
- Everyone thinking that it is their role to try and solve problems for the benefits of better services to residents and customers

5.0 One Council Work Streams

To help organise the many aspects of the modernisation programme it was recommended and approved by Cabinet that eight workstreams would be the focus of the Programme, these being:

One Resident - One Customer - looking after the resident or customer experience and ensuring that the culture of the Council is always considering service delivery and service development from the resident and customer perspective.

One Message - ensuring that both external and internal communications improve significantly. This is essential to ensure that the St Helens narrative is primarily shared with residents and our customers, but also includes businesses, visitors, governmental bodies, students or researchers.

One Budget - delivering the financial strategy set by the Council and looking at how officers manage the budget using digital technology.

One Digital - how to make best use of ICT and digital technology including artificial intelligence. It is also about ensuring that products are fit for purpose, and the renewal of the Council's website and intranet as well as a refresh programme for equipment when it comes to the end of its useful life.

One Space – focused on physical and land assets. It will also ensure digital data for the Council's Asset Register, delivering Cabinet approved investment into assets that the Council has decided to keep and delivering managed disposal for those that the Council have declared as surplus, or for development.

One Practice – focused on governance. Ensuring that governance is modern, transparent and easily accessible for Councillors, officers, residents and customers.

One People - focused on organisational development and recognising the great work of employees. It looks at pay and reward strategies, terms and conditions and the HR policy

framework. In addition, transforming the culture of the organisation to support a modern effective 21st century organisation with an engaged workforce is integral to this workstream

One Outcome – focused on performance management and how performance management and performance data can be best used for decision making by both Councillors and officers

An updated roadmap of delivery against these workstreams is attached at Appendix A

6.0 Governance of the One Council modernisation programme

Effective governance and programme management is crucial, and it is timely that this is refreshed. Going forward the governance approach will be:

Cabinet - will be asked for approval where the spend is significant, the matter is politically sensitive, the matter is either a strategy document or a new or amended policy.

The Leader of the Council - will be the Accountable Cabinet Portfolio Holder and as such the sponsor of the One St Helens: One Council programme. The Leader will receive regular updates on the programme.

The Cabinet Portfolio holder for Corporate Services, Estates and Communications - will be the day to day Cabinet lead for the programme on behalf of the Leader of the Council. Most of the current programme work streams are within this portfolio.

Cabinet Portfolio Holders - will be asked to consider aspects of the programme that fall within their portfolio areas. Cabinet Portfolio Holders will be briefed on the programme at their regular one to ones with appropriate officers and at other meetings where Cabinet may meet collectively.

Scrutiny Commission - will receive One St Helens: One Council update presentations or reports on a quarterly basis.

Audit and Risk Committee - will receive relevant and appropriate updates as requested as part of their work programme.

The Chief Executive and Executive Directors - collectively will undertake the Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) role. Progress with the programme will be overseen by this group.

The Assistant Chief Executive - will be the Programme Director and will lead the programme day to day and be accountable for delivering against agreed timelines.

The One St Helens: One Council Programme Board - will be an officer Board chaired by the Assistant Chief Executive. A trade union representative will be invited to join the Board.

A Technical Design Authority (TDA) - will be established to develop, promote and monitor standards for ICT systems and information to help reduce preventable costs by removing duplication and encouraging the development of systems that are able to work together. The TDA will ensure that change initiatives consider and then agree a technical design as the change is being defined, established, and approved and that the technical design is achievable and fit for purpose for the organisation.

Project Boards - for larger projects, a small project board of officers will be established which will report into the One St Helens: One Council Board.

Project Managers - for larger projects a project manager will be appointed to lead on its delivery and to work with the appropriate Project Board.

Senior Managers and other officers - for smaller projects a senior manager or other appropriate employee will lead and report into the appropriate project board or One St Helens: One Council Board as appropriate.

Communications - throughout the programme internal communications will be vital.

7.0 **Conclusions**

7.1 Progress has been variable to date due to an absence of effective programme management and governance. In addition, it is now timely to integrate the ambitions outlined in the One Council Programme with the Reset and Recovery programme of work. The recommendations in the report and the suggested refresh of governance arrangements will support a more programme led approach to delivery.

8.0 **Implications**

8.1 Financial Implications

Several strategies have been identified that will seek funding e.g. the Asset Management Strategy. Additional staffing costs for running the programme to address some of the deficiencies in the Council will need to be considered. Wherever possible the investment into the One Council programme will be from within existing resources or the re-direction of existing resources.

8.2 Legal Implications

All Legal implications will be considered as part of the programme management arrangements.

8.3 Staffing/HR Implications

Senior Management capacity has already been strengthened to support delivery of the Borough priorities. Further changes within budgets may be needed to ensure the Council further realigns its officer capacity. The trade unions will be briefed and consulted on an ongoing basis. When the officer board is established the trade unions will be invited to join as full participants.

8.4 Impact on our customers/residents

The One Council modernisation programme will lead to greater efficiency and better customer service. This will benefit St Helens as a place, its residents, customers, businesses and visitors who interact with the Council.

The programme creates culture change within the Council, and this will benefit both the Council and its integration and partnership agendas.

8.5 Community Impact Assessment

A full community impact assessment will be completed as a key element of the programme management arrangements.

8.6 Asset / Property Implications

The report to Cabinet in July 2019 recommended that a new Asset Management Strategy be developed. The strategy is now in development and will outline the potential quantum of spend on buildings and disposal or acquisition options to deliver Council services and facilitate the regeneration of the Borough. Cabinet will be asked to determine the level of investment to be associated with the Asset Management Strategy.

8.7 Environmental Implications

The One Council programme deals mainly with the internal working environment of the Council rather than the external environment of St Helens borough. However, the Asset Management Strategy to be presented to Cabinet in the next twelve months, will have contain an approach to deliver the carbon reduction targets of the Borough.

8.8 Policy Framework Implications

Further Policy development will take place to support workstream delivery.

8.9 Risks

A full assessment of risks will be completed as part of the programme management arrangements.

9.0 **Background papers**

- Cabinet report 17 July 2019 - One Council - Modernisation Programme
- Overview & Scrutiny Commission Report – 30th September 2019
- Overview & Scrutiny Briefing Note – 10th February 2020

10 **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Programme Roadmap