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All Wards

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL
CABINET – 4 FEBRUARY 2025
REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR (FINANCE AND TRANSFORMATION)

TRANSFORMATION STRATEGY (YEAR 2)

1   Executive Summary

1.1   This report summarises the Council's progress against the Transformation Strategy for Year 2.

1.2   It also highlights the key areas of focus for Year 3 (2024/25).

2   Recommendation(s)

2.1   It is recommended that Cabinet notes the content of this report.

3   Explanation

3.1   The Council's Transformation Strategy was agreed in December 2022 following a senior management restructure where a new Executive Director post was created to lead the Transformation programme. The strategy sets out how the council will transform services between 2022 to 2025: Transformation strategy 2022-2025 – Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council

3.2   There are five key themes to the strategy which focus on delivering direct change and improvements as well as tools and support for the council's workforce.

Key themes and Achievements

3.3   Technology and Automation

The overall objective is to improve ICT to support services and customer interactions by:

- improving strategy direction and co-ordination

- supporting the organisation

- improving our applications estate

- having a skilled team and flexible contracts.

3.4   Key achievements in Year 2 are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Technology and Automation Achievements in Year 2

Project	Summary	What difference has this project made
Roll out of IT helpdesk portal to staff	As part of the mobilisation of the XMA Service Desk contract, a self-service portal for reporting IT issues and making requests has been implemented.	The tool allows users to report issues directly, without needing to go through an agent via phone or email. This ensures that the user's concerns are accurately captured and enables them to track the history of their case.
Exit from SeeMyData online portal for tenants	Due to concerns around the contract, it was necessary to decommission the existing tenant portal. New functionality was introduced to MyAccount to enable tenants to look up their rent balances.	Risks around the execution of the existing contract were successfully mitigated and tenants' data securely removed. The introduction of the tool to view rent balances has provided replacement for the key function and reduces the impact on the contact centre, as well as providing a foundation for further development.
User hardware review (laptops etc)	With a large number of devices due for replacement the council needed to be confident that future hardware purchases would fit both business and technical requirements. This included the introduction of Windows 11 on all new and some existing devices.	Appropriate hardware standards for user devices have been established. This has allowed WHBC ICT to identify a compliant route to procuring suitable devices, ensuring that hardware will meet business needs and support increased technical demands for the next 5+ years.
Replacing VPN	The existing VPN was approaching end of support and needed replacing to provide better security. As part of the project VPN functionality is provided by new firewalls.	Replacing the VPN has provided enhanced security including the introduction of multi-factor authentication and restricting access by geolocation. VPN functionality is provided

		using new firewall's supported by the council's network infrastructure support partners. This ensures that any vulnerability is rapidly identified and mitigated.
Office 365 Review	The council's existing Enterprise Licence Agreement with Microsoft comes to an end in June 2025, and it was important to understand the requirements and opportunities ahead of assembling a tender via Crown Commercial Services (CCS).	The review has enabled the council to identify opportunities to enhance the council's use of Office 365, including the potential use of Microsoft security products and increased capacity to use collaborative tools with third parties. CCS issued their tender in January 2025, and both outputs from the review and pricing will be reviewed to determine the scope of the agreement.
Intranet Development (Phase 1)	Phase 1 of the project saw new branding deployed to Winnie, the introduction of the CORE news email newsletter, the development of employee news and corporate news hubs and the updating teams/staff structure.	The work completed has delivered more a consistent approach with branding and CORE values. It ensures that news is shared more efficiently and tracks views for maximum engagement. It has improved accessibility for staff with disabilities. Overall, the site is more up to date, gives more information on who does what and provides more staff good news.

3.5   Areas of focus for this theme in 2025-26 will include the continued review and delivery of support models and technology architecture road map. As well as identifying a long-term solution for the IT Desk.

3.6   <u>Data and Performance</u>

The overall objective is to ensure the council officers make good decisions based on high quality date by:

- Ensuring the council holds high quality data

- Making sure data is used well

- Use data to improve and manage service performance.

3.7 Key Achievements in Year 2 are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: Data and Performance Achievements in Year 2

Project	Summary	What difference has this project made
New KPI reporting system	Throughout April and May 2024, a new bespoke KPI system was implemented.	There is now increased transparency and consistency around the council's approach to reporting KPIs. KPIs can be viewed much more easily, and the system is simple and straightforward for staff to use.
Improved management and reporting of complaints	The council's complaints policy was reviewed and refreshed during 2024, following a self- assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaints Handling Code. As part of this, updates were made to the council's CXM system, Jadu, and all staff who are involved in the complaints process received updated training.	Regular reporting allows teams to understand their performance against the policy. Complaints performance is gradually improving.

3.8 Areas of focus for this theme in 2025-26 will include enhancing and further embedding data reporting and performance management across the Council.

3.9 Culture and Workforce

The overall objective is to ensure the council has the right values and culture in place to support change by:

- Driving culture change

- Embracing new ways of working

- Ensuring staff have the skills they need

- Improving staff recruitment and retention.

3.10 Key achievements in Year 2 are summarised in Table 3.

Table 3: Culture and Workforce Achievements in Year 2

Project	Summary	What difference has this project made
Embed council vision & priorities and staff values & behaviours	Throughout 2024, the council has continued to embed through: • Branding of CORE values • Refreshed staff newsletter • Refreshed Team Charters • Introduced regular, staff survey • Regular all-staff and Manager briefings	Actions have progressed to continue to develop positive cultural changes across the council. In the most recent staff survey 85% of staff stated they felt proud to work for the Council. The effectiveness of the actions will continue to be reviewed.
Embed new senior management structure	A new Senior Management structure was implemented in Autumn 2022. In 2024, two new Assistant Director posts, namely AD (Public Realm) and AD (Homes and Neighbourhood), were introduced enhance the refreshed Resident Services & Climate Change directorate. The Senior Management Team continue to develop strong working relationships.	The Senior Management Team continue to lead by example, demonstrating the values and behaviours that are expected of all teams across the council.
Performance Management Framework	A new Performance Management Framework was introduced during 2024 covering areas such as onboarding, probation, team meetings and 360-degree feedback for managers.	The new framework outlines the expectations for both managers and staff to ensure all staff can undertake their role effectively and reach their full potential.
Review of recruitment and retention	New recruitment website went live in February 2024: The Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council careers	The new initiatives have continued to emphasise the council's CORE values, vision and priorities and

	homepage – Careers The council's LinkedIn account is regularly updated to promote the council and advertise job vacancies. This year the council has also used LinkedIN Recruiter to further promote job adverts and job match with potential candidates.	highlight the benefits of working for the council, to support recruitment and retention.

3.11 Areas of focus for this theme in 2025-26 will be to use the results from the staff survey to implement positive changes and ensure effective communication across the organisation. In addition, a new Learning and Development Framework for staff will be developed.

3.12 Customer Experience and Channel Shift

The overall objective is to ensure that the customer is at the heart of everything we do by:

- Making every contact count

- Providing accessible services

- Meeting Customer Service Standards

- Using feedback to make improvements.

3.13 Key achievements under this theme are summarised in Table 4.

Table 4: Customer Experience and Channel Shift Achievements in Year 2

Project	Summary	What difference has this project made
Telephony System Update	The council's legacy on-premise telephony system has been replaced with a cloud equivalent. As part of the change, improvements have been made to the IVR, enhanced call recording and call reporting.	Changes to the phone system can be made more easily. Improved reporting and call recording will inform further improvements.
New customer journeys	More customer service journeys have been developed within the council's CXM, Jadu	Customers can now access more services 24/7 online. Residents can now create their own MyAccount, which

	throughout 2024.	includes options to receive a response, case status updates, and track their cases in their online MyAccount for certain case types. The workflows created in Jadu include automated checks and communications with customers and service teams, reducing administration for staff and a seamless experience for the customer. Service Team staff have improved oversight of case management and performance.
Development of Member Casework process	MemberMyAccounts were rolled out to all Members during 2024.	Members can track the status of their cases and have their own MemberMyAccount. Further work is now underway to enhance case updates.
Selection of chatbot provider and project implementation	Supplier ICS.AI were selected as the council's supplier Chatbot due to go live early 2025.	The chatbot will support channel shift through enhanced website searches and the ability to chat to the contact centre teams in real time.

3.14 Areas of focus for this theme in 2025-26 will include continuing to improve customer services across the council through telephony and self-serve enhancements.

3.15 <u>Project Management and Service Improvement</u>

The overall objective is to ensure the council deliver better outcomes for residents and becoming more efficient by:

- Ensuring projects are managed well

- Monitoring project delivery and performance

- Ensuring the council deliver the best outcomes

- Supporting teams to deliver projects

- Improving oversight and change adoption

3.16 Key Achievements under this theme are summaries in Table 5.

Table 5: Project Management and Service Improvement Achievements in Year 2

Project	Summary	What difference has this project made
Project Management Framework	A new project management framework is now in place, with templates, tools and systems in place to support staff to management key projects.	There is now increased control and consistency around the council's approach to project management.
Revenues and Benefits Migration	The council's Revenue and Benefits service has successfully migrated to the new NEC system in December 2024.	A new, upgraded online portal has been launched as part of the migrations, offering customers greater access and self-serve options to Council Tax, Housing Benefits and Business Rates details.
Social Housing Regulation Act	Throughout 2024, a project group has been set up to self-assess against the requirements of the new Social Housing Regulation Act.	This project has allowed the council to assess areas of improvement needed to meet the requirements of the new Act and associated Consumer Standards.
Community Engagement	The Council has refreshed its approach to community engagement through the adoption of a new Resident Involvement Strategy for tenants. The key principles for a Council-wide Community Engagement Strategy have also been developed and will be considered by Cabinet in 2025. The council has also refreshed its officer-led Community & Engagement Group.	Ensuring effective community engagement is essential to ensure the council is meeting the needs of the community as well as developing community ownership.

3.17 Area of focus for this theme in 2025-26 will include developing a programme of continuous improvement to the Revenues and Benefits system to increase self-

serve and reduce processing times, as well as continuing to improve the community engagement offering.

Implications

4   Legal Implication

4.1   There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendation.

5   Financial Implication

5.1   Failure to deliver key projects and key performance indicators may have a financial impact for the council. Financial implications for individual projects will be considered as part of decision making and as part of the Council's project management and risk management frameworks.

6   Risk Management Implication

6.1   Risks are associated with the delivery of key projects and service performance. Risk management implications for individual projects will be reviewed as part of the Council's project management and risk management frameworks on a project-by-project basis.

7   Security and Terrorism Implication

7.1   There are no security and terrorism implications directly arising from the recommendation.

8   Procurement Implication

8.1   There are no procurement implications directly arising from the recommendation.

9   Climate Change Implication

9.1   There are no direct climate change implications directly arising from the recommendation. However, a number of themes and projects in the Transformation programme will continue to contribute to the priority: Action on Climate Change.

10   Human Resources Implication

10.1 Culture and Workforce is a key theme of the Transformation Strategy. Any implications for individual projects will be considered as part of the Council's project management and risk management frameworks on a project by project basis.

11   Health and Wellbeing Implication

11.1 There are no health and wellbeing implications directly arising from the recommendation.

12   Health and Wellbeing Implication

12.1 Regular updates will be provided to officers and Members, as appropriate throughout the year. In addition, information, and access to new systems etc is available on the intranet and will continue to be regularly updated

13 **<u>Link to Corporate Priorities</u>**

13.1 This report is linked to all the council's priorities.

14 **<u>Equality and Diversity</u>**

14.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has not been completed because the recommendation does not propose changes to existing service-related policies or the development of new service-related policies.

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