

TRANSFORMATION STRATEGY 2024-2028 (FUTURE NEW FOREST – TRANSFORMING TOMORROW, TOGETHER)

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 That Cabinet recommends to Council that the Transformation Strategy at Appendix 1 and the Year One Indicative Work Programme at Appendix 2, be approved.

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At its meeting in July, Cabinet approved the development of a transformation strategy to deliver change, improve outcomes, and contribute to resolving the (General Fund) Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) gap.
- 2.2 Since then, the draft Corporate Plan for 2024 to 2028 has been developed which sets out the administration's priorities and commitments over the next four years to meet the needs of residents, businesses and the New Forest area. This plan will be delivered in the context of some significant challenges including advancing technology and customer needs, the potential for significant future budget gaps, attracting and retaining staff, along with climate and environmental considerations.
- 2.3 The Future New Forest Transformation Strategy (Appendix 1) provides the framework to respond to these challenges and underpins delivery of the Corporate Plan by setting out how we will transform the council so we can meet customer needs, protect finances, and embed sustainability under the four transformation themes of:
- Customer and Digital Services
 - People and Capabilities
 - Assets and Accommodation
 - Finances and Delivery
- 2.4 The council has a good track record for delivering services, good resident satisfaction and sound financial management. However, the context of local government is changing and there is an increasingly compelling need to think differently about what the council does and how it does it. The overarching goal of the transformation strategy is to ensure long-term sustainability of the council, responding to financial challenges and freeing up capacity to respond to future, unknown pressures and strategic choices.
- 2.5 Significant work has been undertaken over the past year to better understand where the organisation is now. This has included customer research, data analysis (including benchmarking) and staff engagement to identify opportunities, all of which have contributed to informing the strategy.

3. FUTURE NEW FOREST – DELIVERING THE STRATEGY

- 3.1 The vision for a transformed New Forest District Council is:

“Future New Forest: Investing in our people and services to meet customer needs, protecting our finances and embedding sustainability to preserve our unique place by transforming tomorrow, together.”

- 3.2 The vision acknowledges the significant contribution of our staff in delivering the future organisation together. Staff engagement sessions during the summer provided opportunities for employees across the organisation to share thoughts and ideas to help shape the future organisation. 130 employees attended sessions, with over 300 suggestions captured, including 75 from operational staff at the three council depots.
- 3.3 It is essential that all employees continue to be engaged and kept informed with opportunities to be involved in identifying issues and designing solutions for future ways of working. Branding and communications planning will ensure the programme has a recognisable identity with a pro-active campaign designed to engage and communicate effectively with staff. Additionally, a Change Champion group has been established, with 23 representatives from across the organisation currently supporting the development of the Customer Strategy.
- 3.4 The strategy includes a high-level road map for delivery, highlighting key phases of change and milestones around each of the programme themes. This is supplemented by an indicative work programme detailing specific projects for proposed delivery in year one (Appendix 2).

4. NEXT STEPS

- 4.1 Delivery of the transformation programme will be further supported by a detailed transformation programme plan, analysis of activities and processes in line with the objectives set out, and a detailed benefits case. These will be considered in line with the programme governance set out in the strategy.
- 4.2 The strategy highlights the risk of sufficient capacity and capability to deliver this ambitious programme. To respond to this, it is appropriate to bring in new resources (internal or external, or a mix of both) that can help shape and implement delivery of key initiatives and projects. A programme manager will ensure all objectives are met and benefits realised. It is likely that this will need to be supplemented by specialist third party support which will be procured on an individual project basis. Additional capacity for delivery will also be needed from within service areas as projects and reviews impact on specific teams.
- 4.3 A resource plan will be developed in line with the indicative work programme and considered through the formal governance arrangements. The cash umbrella set aside during the Council's budget setting for 2023/24 (£250k per annum, for a period of 3 years) will be reviewed in light of these requirements to ensure programme delivery and the realisation of the benefits set out.

5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 The transformation programme provides a proactive and positive opportunity to respond to the challenges the council faces, providing long term sustainability and an organisation that is fit for the future.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The October 2023 Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2023 – 2027 provides for a cumulative targeted savings of £1.250 million general fund and £500k housing revenue account arising from the transformation programme. Identification and delivery of savings will be set out in a detailed benefits case, with benefits realisation management used to track savings.

6.2 Savings specifically arising from transformation activities will be released through three main activities:

1. Increasing income (exc. fees & charges)
Achieved through commercialisation, increased cost recovery for non-statutory services, income yield.
2. Reducing spend through systems and procurement
Achieved through rationalisation and effective procurement (Budget and procurement analysis activity)
3. Reducing spend on people
Achieved through process design and activity analysis to identify capacity (decision on how much capacity to release as savings)

6.3 The degree to which these efficiencies are released as savings is a decision for leadership and proposals will be brought back as appropriate through the programme governance arrangements.

6.4 Budget provision of £750k has already been approved over the three years to 2025/26 to provide for resources and support for programme delivery.

6.5 It is likely that further sums will be required on a spend-to-save basis for software and to facilitate new ways of working. Individual projects will come forward as required through the governance structure and will align to financial regulations in terms of the necessary approval parameters for any additional funding requirements.

7. CRIME & DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

7.1 None

8. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Climate and sustainability is included as one of the four key challenges in the case for change and delivery of each of the objectives will be mapped against these challenges to ensure the strategy is effective in addressing them.

9. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 A change impact assessment will be undertaken for all significant changes to services, customers and staff arising from the transformation programme.

10. DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS

10.1 None

11. RESOURCES AND TRANSFORMATION OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL COMMENTS

11.1 The Resources and Transformation O&S Panel received and noted a presentation update on progress with the Transformation Strategy. The Panel were supportive that the Transformation Strategy be recommended for approval by Cabinet.

12. PORTFOLIO HOLDER COMMENTS

12.1 I am pleased to support this transformation strategy. It rightly focuses on meeting the needs of our residents and customers, and on investing in our staff to ensure we are

an employer of choice, attracting and retaining the skilled and motivated people we need to deliver our services.

I don't underestimate the ambitions of the transformation programme and the important role it has in meeting our potentially significant funding gap over the next few years, in turn enabling us to deliver on our corporate plan commitments.

The strategy sets out a clear vision and objectives for the future and most importantly positions us well to respond to the challenges we face as a local authority in a proactive and positive way.

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Background Papers:

NFDC Transformation Programme Update
(Cabinet 5 July 2023)