# NFDC Transformation Strategy (2025 Update)

## 1. Introduction

The Future New Forest Transformation Strategy was approved in December 2023 to cover a four-year period from April 2024 to March 2028, the same period as the NFDC Corporate Plan. The strategy established how the council would transform to meet changing customer needs, protect finances and embed sustainability.

In its introduction it was acknowledged that "Between 2024 and 2028 the economic, political, technological and environmental context is likely to change significantly, so the strategy and objectives set out within it will need to be flexible to respond to those changes."

This has proved to be the case with the publication of the English Devolution White Paper on 16 December 2024 which signalled the government's intention to abolish district and county councils and replace them with new unitary authorities by April 2028. This process is referred to a local government reorganisation (LGR).

Given that the original strategy's primary intent was to secure the long-term sustainability of NFDC, and that the implication of the White Paper is that NFDC will no longer exist after March 2028, the council must consider whether there is still value in pursuing the strategy.

This updated and revised strategy revisits the case for change and establishes the basis for continuing with the strategy and the delivery of the transformation programme.

## 2. Case for change

LGR has fundamentally changed the context in which NFDC approaches transformation. The projected financial benefits of transformation would not be fully, or even largely, realised ahead of the vesting day of the new unitary authority, ie the day the new authority becomes operational and the existing authorities dissolve. However, this does not wholly negate the original drivers and there is a new responsibility for the council to ensure the organisation is well-prepared for the transition to the new authority.

Cancellation of the transformation strategy and programme would mean that no meaningful progress would be made over the next three years (as a minimum) to improve the council's use of data and technology, to improve the quality and adoption of online services or to develop the essential skills that staff will need to thrive as part of a new council. Our customers would see a decline rather than improvement in how they access our services.

The responsible course of action is to embrace the reality of change and to respond to the uncertainty surrounding LGR by ensuring the council's staff, systems, data and processes are well-positioned to adapt to a range of future scenarios. This maximises the chances that New Forest residents will experience service improvements leading up to vesting day, rather than disruption and decline.

Instead of undermining the case for transformation, LGR provides a new lens through which to view the original drivers for change, as Table 1 below shows.

| Original driver for transformation | Impact of LGR |
|---|---|
| **Modernising services**<br><br>Our systems and processes need to keep pace with the advance of digital technologies and the impact these are having on people's lives and expectations.<br><br>There is growing demand for digital access to council services, accompanied by a high level of access to the internet and growing capability among our residents. We need to improve the customer experience by joining up our data and systems, some of which are now outdated. Services across the public and not-for-profit sectors are often poorly signposted and integrated and we need to make it easier for customers to find the services they need. | **Stronger case for change**<br><br>The advance of digital technologies continues. Some council systems are end of life and cannot continue for a minimum of another three years without action being taken. Whilst LGR should make it easier for customers to find services, because most council services will be delivered by a single unitary authority, there is still the need to work with the wider public and voluntary sectors.<br><br>Furthermore, one of the key drivers for LGR is to put local government on a sustainable footing and deliver efficiencies. We want to demonstrate leadership in transformational design and technical delivery to cement NFDC's position in the emerging LGR context. The new unitary authority will be better placed to realise efficiencies if NFDC has replaced out of date systems and improved the quality and connectedness of its data ahead of vesting day. |
| **Financial constraints**<br><br>Rising costs and new burdens mean we face a significant and growing budget gap.<br><br>Rising costs of service delivery combined with new challenges and burdens means we are facing potentially significant budget deficits over the next four years. We must continue to prioritise and find ways to reduce the cost of delivery. We must embed financial responsibility into all that we do. | **Adjusted case for change**<br><br>The financial challenge remains but LGR changes the context in which this is addressed.<br><br>While we do not believe large scale structural change in advance of LGR is practical or advisable, given the structural changes to local government within Hampshire that are likely as a consequence of LGR, investing in technological enablement and process redesign can still deliver efficiencies that may be cashable over the next 2-3 years due to organic changes such as natural turnover. However, these savings are likely to be significantly smaller than those originally sought. |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Capacity and capability**<br>We need new skills to deliver the changes we must make.<br><br>The world is changing fast with the rapid growth of technology and artificial intelligence (AI). The council needs new skills to respond to the opportunities and challenges we face.<br><br>However, most councils are facing recruitment and retention problems. We need to release capacity from parts of the organisation to enable increased focus on strategic priorities. We need to develop a more agile workforce to respond to a changing local government landscape and a digital world. | **Stronger case for change**<br>The ambitious timescale laid out by the government for LGR means that it will be even more important to release staff capacity to support the changes.<br><br>LGR will create significant challenges and opportunities for council staff. As NFDC, we have a responsibility to prepare our staff for this change to ensure they are best placed to thrive in the new unitary world. Change management, digital and customer skills will be even more valuable to both staff and the future unitary authority. |
| **Climate and sustainability**<br>Meeting national and local targets to reduce emissions and support nature will require us to change the way we use resources and deliver services.<br><br>The council declared a Climate Change and Nature Emergency in 2021 and is committed to leading efforts to tackle the impacts of extreme weather and climate change in the New Forest, reducing emissions to reach net zero and supporting nature recovery. We must work in partnership with residents, businesses and other public services to make a real impact.<br><br>These changes will affect all aspects of council operations, including service delivery, the health and wellbeing of staff, the suitability of our housing stock, the lifespan of our assets and the condition of our habitats. | **Same case for change**<br>National and local targets to reduce emissions are unchanged by LGR and the case for change remains. |

*Table 1: Impact of LGR on NFDC transformation drivers*

# 3. Vision, objectives and scope

## Vision

In the context of LGR and the future transition to a larger unitary authority providing the services currently provided by NFDC, we have revised our vision for Future New Forest. We have retained, and in some cases adapted, the four transformation themes from the 2024 strategy and continue to structure our objectives and workstreams around these.

"Future New Forest: Modernising and improving services to meet changing customer needs and ensure our people, technology, data and processes are ready for the significant changes local government reorganisation will bring."

## Objectives by theme

### Customer and digital services

This theme is about how we redesign services to improve customer experience, make better use of technology and remove manual effort. Services should be digital by design, irrespective of how customers contact us.

**Objective C1**
Our customers will be at the heart of our digital-by-design approach.

**Objective C2**
We will review and catalogue our data, identify the data that is most valuable as we move towards LGR and ensure it is accurate and accessible to ensure a smooth transition to unitary status.

**Objective C3**
We will invest in the digital capabilities that are most likely to bring long term benefits for customers and staff during and after LGR. This means they will be scalable, adaptable, interoperable and reusable.

### People and capabilities

This theme is about how we develop our people and culture, making sure roles, behaviours and skills evolve to meet new service designs and needs.

**Objective P1**
We will ensure our values, behaviours and culture are aligned, with a focus on prioritising customer needs through a period of rapid change.

**Objective P2**
We will invest in our people to ensure they have the skills they need to deliver, manage and adapt to the significant organisational changes ahead.

### Assets and accommodation

This theme is about how we use and maintain our assets to improve sustainability and ensure they are in the best possible condition at the point of transfer to the new unitary authority.

**Objective A1**

We will prioritise operational assets so they are in the best possible condition ahead of vesting day to the new unitary authority.

**Objective A2**

We will continue to challenge our asset portfolio to reduce environmental impact and enhance their financial contribution

*Transformation delivery and LGR readiness*

This theme is about how we ensure that our investment in transformation delivers tangible benefits, for customers and such that the council is well-prepared for LGR.

**Objective D1**

We will ensure that all transformation activity will deliver meaningful improvements for customers in the short term and/or will position the organisation to transition as smoothly as possible to the new unitary authority.

**Objective D2**

We will shift to a more empowered and accountable management culture.

## Scope

Revised scope:

*Customer and digital services*

| In scope | Out of scope |
|---|---|
| • Any and all service processes may be reviewed to identify ways to improve customer experience, enhance performance and release capacity.<br>• All current software applications supporting front- and back-office operations are in scope for standardisation, optimisation and integration.<br>• Replacement of current CRM and housing maintenance systems.<br>• Identifying, cataloguing, cleansing and connecting key datasets to support customer delivery and/or LGR preparation.<br>• Implementing the Customer Strategy, including associated changes to channels, customer SLAs, KPIs and feedback mechanisms.<br>• Partnership working across the public and not-for-profit sectors join up services and processes to make access to key services better for our residents, businesses and visitors.<br>• Consolidation of customer service activity to simplify, integrate and consolidate existing roles. | • Decisions about how capacity released through service design is realised.<br>• Full structural reorganisation of customer services around the digital platform/CRM.<br>• Investment in developing systems which are unlikely to be retained post-LGR.<br>• Changes to formally documented policies that have been adopted by elected members.<br>• Changes to service delivery, eg stopping services or reducing service levels. |

*People and capabilities*

| In scope | Out of scope |
|---|---|
| • People Strategy development and delivery across all services and teams, including developing organisational values, behaviours and staff skills.<br>• Changes to reward and recognition approaches<br>• Minor changes to organisational structures to better align capacity and capability | • Significant changes to staffing structures and job descriptions.<br>• Changes to pay and grading structures, terms and conditions or employment models.<br>• Significant changes to learning management systems or training providers |

*Assets and accommodation*

| In scope | Out of scope |
|---|---|
| • All operational buildings eg offices, depots, stores<br>• Delivery of the Strategic Asset Management Plan (SAMP) 2025-onwards | • HRA assets, eg social housing properties, garages, and associated systems*<br>• Operational assets within Place and Sustainability directorate (plant and fleet)<br>• Redesign of customer, community or workforce facing spaces.<br>• Major investment in assets that would only deliver returns beyond the life of the current authority. |

*ongoing investment via HRA business plan outside of scope of transformation scope*

*Transformation delivery and LGR readiness*

| In scope | Out of scope |
|---|---|
| • Oversight of all projects and programmes relevant to organisation transformation and/or LGR<br>• Transformation programme governance<br>• Benefits management<br>• Service and financial planning processes<br>• Leadership, management and performance culture.<br>• LGR planning and preparation | • Delivery of long-term financial savings linked to workforce reductions.<br>• Leadership decisions on the method of realising benefits identified through the transformation programme. |

# 4. Measuring our success

## Customer and digital

- Customer experience (% rating Good or above)
- Number of fully digital services (definition and baseline to be confirmed)
- Customers choosing digital channels (% requests received via digital channels)

## People and capabilities

- Long term vacancies (% vacancies filled first time)
- Staff retention (% of staff who leave within 12 months)
- Equipping staff to do their jobs (% who agree they have had the training and development needed to perform current duties)
- Staff development (% staff agree there are training and development opportunities to support them to achieve their ambitions / progress their career)
- Net promoter (% of staff recommend the council as a great place to work)

## Assets and accommodation

- Assets have been identified, classified and had a condition survey undertaken as part of the asset strategy (% conditions surveys undertaken)
- Improvement in financial return of NFDC asset base (confirm method)
- Reduced emissions from operational council assets (% reduction against baseline)'

## Transformation delivery and LGR readiness

- Project objectives and benefits defined for all transformation initiatives, linked to transformation drivers and monitored by PMO.
- New service and financial planning processes implemented
- Managers agree they are empowered to manage resources to deliver their target outcomes (% agreement)

## 5. Roadmap

| LGR Readiness & Programme Delivery | 2025 | | | | 2026 | | | | 2027 | | | | 2028 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Jan | Apr | Jul | Oct | Jan | Apr | Jul | Oct | Jan | Apr | Jul | Oct | Jan | Apr |
| **Business Case/Transformation Strategy** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Agree revised Strategy & BC to ensure alignment with LGR impacts | █ | █ | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Agree priorities, objectives, outcomes & measures | | █ | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Review and revise programme planning to ensure alignment | | █ | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Agree and baseline revised KPIs/programme measures & high level benefits | | █ | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Agree transformation support/supplier contract | | █ | █ | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Agree work packages for transformation support partners/supplier | | █ | █ | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Mobilise transformation support | | █ | █ | █ | █ | | | | | | | | | |
| **Transformation Portfolio Governance & Oversight** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Agree purpose & scope for centralised PMO | | █ | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Establish organisational PMO (structures, systems, processes, people) | | | █ | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Review governance structures to ensure alignment with PMO | | | █ | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Programme Delivery- Programme benefits management** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Define benefits & agree detailed profiles (owners, measures, returns period) | | █ | █ | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Establish benefits management system/process | | | █ | █ | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Organisational Data** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Conduct organisation data gap analysis & validate outcomes | | | █ | █ | | | | | | | | | | |
| Create recommendations to address gaps | | | | █ | | | | | | | | | | |
| Agree approach to organisation data & associated delivery plan | | | | █ | █ | | | | | | | | | |
| Implement plans | | | | | | | | | | | | █ | █ | █ |

| Customer & Digital | 2025 | | | | 2026 | | | | 2027 | | | | 2028 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Jan | Apr | Jul | Oct | Jan | Apr | Jul | Oct | Jan | Apr | Jul | Oct | Jan | Apr |
| **Define digital architecture and capabilities** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Align customer and digital strategies | █ | █ | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Customer journeys and design patterns | | █ | █ | | | | | | | | | | | |

| Task | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Assess existing customer data sets | ■ | ■ | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Establish digital building blocks** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Procure new tools/capabilities | ■ | ■ | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Implement new tools/capabilities | | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Deliver MVP digital services and capabilities** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Establish MVP components (inc portal, e-forms, CRM and chat) | | ■ | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Implement 1st phase customer changes | | | | ■ | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Implement revenues and benefits integrated forms and portal | | | | | ■ | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Prioritised redesign of services (for Digital Platform Readiness only)** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Develop user testing approach and recruit users | | | ■ | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Identify priority services for redesign (eg Top 20 list) | | ■ | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Standard service redesign approach | | | ■ | ■ | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Design-Prototype-Build-Deploy cycle | | | | | | | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ |
| **Deliver housing maintenance system** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Project planning and alignment with wider transformation (Housing/ICT led) | | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Requirements gathering, functional, non-functional (Housing led) | | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Regulatory and legal compliance/data and reporting documented (Housing led) | | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Supplier selection & procurement (Housing led) | | ■ | ■ | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Integration and testing | | | | ■ | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Implement digital housing repairs process integrated with CRM/customer portal | | | | | | | ■ | ■ | | | | | | | | | |
| **Regulatory Services System Replacement** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Agree approach to regulatory system replacement | | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Asses current business requirements and refine/rationalise | | | ■ | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Potential market engagement | | | | ■ | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Deployment Customer Strategy** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Embed customer competencies into recruitment and onboarding process | | ■ | ■ | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Customer learning needs established and solution identified | | | | ■ | ■ | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Roll out customer learning solutions | | | | | ■ | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Structures** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

| | 2025 | | | | 2026 | | | | 2027 | | | | 2028 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Jan | Apr | Jul | Oct | Jan | Apr | Jul | Oct | Jan | Apr | Jul | Oct | Jan | Apr |
| Assess opportunities to make customer delivery structure changes where appropriate | | ■ | ■ | ■ | | | | | | | | | | |
| Agree redesigned structures / role changes | | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | | | | | | | | |
| Implement structural changes / role changes | | | | ■ | ■ | ■ | | | | | | | | |

## People & Capabilities

| | 2025 | | | | 2026 | | | | 2027 | | | | 2028 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Jan | Apr | Jul | Oct | Jan | Apr | Jul | Oct | Jan | Apr | Jul | Oct | Jan | Apr |
| **Organisational development** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Write People Strategy | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Organisational learning needs analysis | | | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Values and Behaviours Framework Development | | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Roll out and Embed Values & Behaviours | | | | | | ■ | | | | | | | | |
| Leadership development programme | | | | | | | | | | ■ | | | | |
| Employee engagement programme | | | | | | | | | | ■ | | | | |
| **LGR/Transformation Readiness** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Identify transformation skills & learning requirements | | | | | | ■ | | | | | | | | |
| Develop solution approach | | | | | | | ■ | | | | | | | |
| Upskill workforce | | | | | | | | ■ | ■ | ■ | | | | |
| **Change Management Approach** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Establish org Change Management approach/toolkit | | ■ | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Establish Change Champions network | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Roll out and embed NFDC Change Management approach | | | | | | | | | ■ | ■ | ■ | | | |
| **People Strategy** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Improvements to HR processes eg onboarding and offboarding, performance management | | ■ | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Refreshed & improved comms and engagement (inc intranet) | | | | ■ | ■ | ■ | | | | | | | | |
| Workforce Data Gaps & Requirements | | ■ | ■ | ■ | | | | | | | | | | |

## Assets & Accommodation

| | 2025 | | | | 2026 | | | | 2027 | | | | 2028 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Jan | Apr | Jul | Oct | Jan | Apr | Jul | Oct | Jan | Apr | Jul | Oct | Jan | Apr |
| **Asset Strategy** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

| Task | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Develop Asset Strategy | ▓ | ▓ | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Operational assets review | | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Investment and disposals programme** | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Address compliance risks | | | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | | | | | | | | | | |
| Asset disposals policy development | | ▓ | ▓ | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Community Asset Transfer policy development | | ▓ | ▓ | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Agree Strategic Asset Management plan and associated policies | | | ▓ | ▓ | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Implement asset management plan | | | | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | ▓ | | | | | | |