

Committee: Cabinet

Date: Thursday, 9
October 2025

Title: Quarterly update on The Corporate
Programme

**Portfolio
Holder:** Councillor Petrina Lees, Leader of the Council

**Report
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Key decision: No

Summary

1. The purpose of this report is to provide Cabinet with an update on the introduction of new transformation and project capacity and approaches, and to agree frequency of updates for Cabinet.
2. In 2024, the Council took a decision to invest in transformation leadership capacity with the aim of driving forward the organisation's transformation programme of activity.
3. In response to the Government's announcement of the opportunity to join the priority programme for Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation, the Council's leadership team reviewed the purpose and remit of the proposed transformation role. The role was appointed to in April 2025.
4. The Head of Transformation and Projects has worked with the Corporate Management Team to define the following priorities for the first twelve months of this new activity:
 - a. Develop and implement a corporate approach to programme and project management, supported with a suite of tools and staff engagement
 - b. Establish a corporate programme, aligned to the Corporate Plan, for priority project and programme activities and provide visibility of progress and performance against plans, benefits and objectives
 - c. Provide programme management leadership to the Council's transformation programme and the Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation programme.

Recommendations

5. The Cabinet is requested to note the contents of this report

Financial Implications

6. The introduction of project and transformation leadership capacity, the introduction of The Corporate Programme, and the development of consistent tools and approaches will have a number of wider benefits but is intended to support the organisation to deliver on its Corporate Plan and Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP).
7. The target saving defined in the Blueprint 2.0 programme aligns with the current MTFP figure of **£2,500,000** delivered in budget for financial year 2030/31 with **£900,000** delivered in budget for financial year 2026/27.

Background Papers

8. None.

Impact

- 9.

Communication/Consultation	Corporate Management Team (CMT) and Informal Cabinet (ICB)
Community Safety	N/A
Equalities	N/A
Health and Safety	N/A
Human Rights/Legal Implications	N/A
Sustainability	N/A
Ward-specific impacts	N/A
Workforce/Workplace	This programme of work will provide a clear strategic alignment with the Corporate Plan, transformation projects and service activities.

Situation

10. **Programme & Project Management** - A project lifecycle has been designed in line with best practice and tailored for the Council. A range of project and programme leadership and management tools and templates have been developed, tested with a group of key users and made available to all staff. A working group has been established with project management leadership professionals in a number of Essex councils to explore best practice and develop a framework for embedding the culture and skills needed for successful programme and project management.

11. **The Corporate Programme** has been established based on priorities identified in the Corporate Plan, together with priority work already underway in Housing and Planning. The six programme themes are:

- Blueprint 2.0
- Community Uttlesford
- Devolution & Local Government Reorganisation
- Waste Operations & Environmental Services
- Planning Policy, Process & Service Programme
- Housing Service Transformation

12. Structuring the corporate programme into these themes will ensure that planned activity has strong alignment with the corporate plan outcomes, benefits are mapped and measured, and that the delivery of activities, outcomes and benefits is visible to senior leaders to both celebrate success and support successful delivery.

13. Monthly reporting to Corporate Management Team (CMT) has been established and the Cabinet will receive quarterly updates.

The Corporate Programme

Protecting & enhancing our environment	Putting residents first	Building strong communities	Encouraging economic growth		
Corporate Activity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programme Reporting for the 6 Corporate Programme Themes • Progress reporting for the core corporate cycles of activity: Budget setting, Service Planning, Performance Reporting, U -Perform, Risk & Audit 					
Blueprint 2.0	"Community" Uttlesford	Devolution & Local Government Reorganisation	Environmental Services	Planning	Housing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workforce & People Programme • Sustainable financial position • Cross cutting projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate community engagement • Rurality • Communities • Health & Wellbeing, • Economic Development & Skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple phases of Devolution • Multiple phases of LGR 	Focus on Waste Operations & Environmental Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy • Process • Service Development • Delivery projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy • Process • Service Development • Delivery projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy • Process • Service development • Delivery projects

Blueprint 2.0

14. The Blueprint Uttlesford programme was intended to deliver transformative change to the organisation and its ways of working over a number of years. This ambition was reflected in the scope and scale of early programme design.

15. In early 2025, it was recognised that the timeline and scope of Blueprint Uttlesford required significant review in response to the emerging LGR programme. Members were asked to note and endorse the pause to wider Blueprint Uttlesford work at a cabinet meeting in April 2025.

16. However, it was recognised that the organisation needed to continue to deliver project activity that will support delivery of a balanced budget, deliver on the Workforce Plan (which was identified in the Corporate Peer Challenge report, December 2024) as a priority for the organisation, and drive forward projects and activities that have a cross-cutting and significant benefit. As a result, the Blueprint 2.0 programme has been designed with three workstreams:

- a. **Delivery of the workforce plan** – focus on learning and development, staff engagement, and staff support and development
- b. **Delivery of financial projects that will support a sustainable financial position until LGR implementation** - sustainable income projects, cost reduction projects and budget reviews in development
- c. **Delivery of significant cross cutting projects** – starting with delivery of the London Road Offices Decarbonisation project and introduction of the new Technology 1 finance system. Other projects will be added as they are identified.

17. The programme has been initiated with an agreed scope, objectives and board structure. Delivery is underway for the in-scope cross-cutting projects and detailed design of the workforce and financial workstreams is progressing well.

Devolution & Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)

18. The timeline for Devolution and LGR is now clearer, and it is recognised that there will be distinct phases of activity taking place over the coming years, often with a need to respond at pace and on multiple strands of work. There is a need to coordinate tasks, resources and progress in order to ensure best value use of resources and opportunities are maximised.

19. A programme management approach has been deployed to address both the challenges and opportunities presented by this complex, multi partner programme. Initial deliverables to secure a robust business case for future unitary councils have been completed according to planned timescales and milestones.

Community Uttlesford

20. The Community Uttlesford Programme will bring together projects and delivery activities in Communities, Economic Growth & Skills, Health & Wellbeing, and Climate & Biodiversity to ensure that local challenges such as rurality are considered in project and service design and further enhance visibility of the impact of these activities. The programme will build on existing, successful initiatives such as the establishment of Sustainable Uttlesford and the recently distributed Community Safety guide.

21. Internal engagement with service leads has started and it is intended to shape the scope and structure of the programme in the Autumn 2025.

Waste Operations and Environmental Services

- 22. This service area has significant impact on all households through day to day services at the kerbside and in communities. There are projects in delivery that will further enhance waste services and support delivery of key strategic objectives to reduce waste and increase the proportion recycled, reused or composted.
- 23. It is proposed to review previous work undertaken and develop an overarching programme to increase visibility, support future delivery and ensure compliance with the legislative requirements of the Environment Act 2021, particularly Simpler Recycling.
- 24. The programme will also address upcoming challenges around recruitment and retention of specialist skills and experience in Environmental Health. The programme has been initiated with a discovery workshop to identify key drivers, challenges and opportunities, and delivery of two member engagement sessions to set levels of ambition and explore priorities and ideas.

Planning Policy, Process & Service Programme

- 25. A significant transformation programme has been delivered in the Planning Service with a focus on developing and retaining skills, strengthening processes and developing a new Local Plan.
- 26. The Planning Service Programme will provide structure and focus to a second phase of work that will further optimise policy, process, systems and workforce, and enhance the reputation of the Service. A programme discovery workshop has been held with the Planning Service Management Team.

Housing Service Transformation –

- 27. Following successful delivery of the complex insourcing of the Housing Repairs activity in early 2025, the Housing Service Transformation programme will focus on developing and retaining skills, strengthening processes and systems, developing the policy framework and achieving highest standards of Tenant Satisfaction and outcomes from housing regulatory inspections.

Corporate Activity

- 28. The six programme themes are overlaid with a Corporate Activity layer bringing together reporting on the planning and progress for key, cyclical corporate activities (e.g. Budget setting, Service Planning, Performance Reporting, U-Perform, Risk & Audit). The inclusion of this layer recognises that planning for project and performance delivery activities need to dovetail into core corporate activities.

Next steps for Autumn 2025

- 29. **Programme & Project Management** - work in collaboration with other councils to design a framework for developing culture and skills around programme and project management practice.

Learning pathways will be developed to support leadership team members and staff in developing and enhancing project management skills and use of the new corporate suite of tools.

30. **Blueprint 2.0** – complete the design of remaining workstreams and progress to delivery.
31. **Devolution & Local Government Reorganisation** – engage with national and regional examples and with colleagues across Essex to develop a phased programme plan that supports the Council to optimise in each phase of transition.
32. **Community Uttlesford** – commence programme initiation with the goal of shaping the scope and structure of the programme
33. **Waste Operations & Environmental Services** – complete programme design with the goal of formalising scope, objectives and workstreams
34. **Planning Policy, Process & Service Programme** – complete programme design with the goal of formalising scope, objectives and workstreams
35. **Housing Service Transformation** – commence programme initiation with discovery workshop to inform scope, objectives and tranches of activity.

Risk Analysis

36.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
There are no direct risks associated with this report. The risks will be identified within each programme theme, project and/or workstream			

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.