

Committee:	Cabinet	Date: Thursday, 15 January 2026
Title:	Quarterly update on The Corporate Programme	
Portfolio Holder:	Cllr Petrina Lees, Leader of the Council	
Report Author:	Katy Chambers Head of Transformation & Projects kchambers@uttlesford.gov.uk	Key decision: No

Summary

1. The purpose of this report is to provide Cabinet with an update on the progress of implementing transformation and project capacity, and to provide an update on The Corporate Programme.
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 priorities for the Head of Transformation and Projects for the first twelve months of this new activity are:
 - 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 (LGR) programme.
5. In order to drive forward the delivery of critical programmes and embed the Council's agreed approach to projects and programmes, the Corporate Management Team have agreed to form a Transformation & Projects Service and team.

Recommendations

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

Financial Implications

7. 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).

The target saving defined in the Blueprint 2.0 programme aligns with the current MTFP figure of **£5,765,000** required to be delivered by financial year 2030/31, with **£2,257,000** of that sum already identified for financial year 2026/27, leaving a balance of £3,508,000 to identify and deliver.

The Transformation & Projects Service will be funded by:

- a. Allocation of £413,370 from the Transformation Reserve
- b. Allocation of £205,282.50 from the Housing Revenue Account

The spend will be profiled across the final quarter of Financial Year 2025-26, 2026-27 and 2027-28.

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.
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Situation

10. **Programme & Project Management** is becoming further embedded across the organisation.
11. The project management tools and templates are now being used in a number of business areas, with use modelled and supported by the Head of Transformation & Projects.
12. A design has been approved by Corporate Management Team to form a Transformation & Projects Service team funded by the transformation reserve set aside by the Council, and the Housing Revenue Account. The current resource level for project and programme work is one officer (the Head of Transformation & Projects) and there is a need to increase capacity and improve resilience. Creation of the Transformation & Projects Service will increase capacity to a total of six full-time equivalent (FTE), made up of programme managers, project officers and business analysts. This investment in skills and capacity for programme and project management and business analysis, will help the Council drive forward the delivery of critical activity within The Corporate Programme, and embed the Council's agreed approach to projects and programmes.
13. The inter-authority working group established with project management leadership professionals in a number of Essex councils and chaired by the Head of Transformation & Projects has grown to 12 member authorities. The group has progressed work sharing tools and templates, and exploring best practice and approaches to embedding the culture and skills needed for successful programme and project management.
14. **The Corporate Programme (TCP)** 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



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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on Waste Operations & Environmental Services 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 		

TCP - Blueprint 2.0

15. As set out in the last quarterly update to Cabinet, the Blueprint 2.0 programme has been designed with three workstreams:

- Delivery of the workforce plan** – focus on learning and development, staff engagement, and staff support and development
- 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
- 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.

The Workforce Plan workstream has been designed and commenced delivery. Key achievements over the last three months have included recruitment of Learning & Development lead, delivery of a learning survey open to all staff to inform priorities for future learning opportunities and securing access to a shared online learning management system (hosted by Harlow DC). The new Learning Management System is on track to rollout to staff in January 2026 and will deliver a step change in access to quality learning opportunities, how managers can support team members on their development pathway, and the Council's ability to demonstrate compliance with mandatory training requirements.

16. The cross-cutting workstream has expanded to comprise the following projects:

- Implementation of a new Finance system (go-live date 1 April 2026)

- b. London Road Offices Decarbonisation
- c. Robotic Process Automation Proof of Concept
- d. Scoping work on reducing the Climate Impact of estates & operations

17. Linked to work on the MTFP and budget for 2026-27, the objectives and scope of work for the Finance workstream is currently under review.

TCP - Devolution & Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)

- 18. The timeline for Devolution and LGR is multi-year with distinct phases of activity taking place over the coming years, often with a need to respond at pace and on multiple strands of work.
- 19. Work to form the Greater Essex Combined County Authority (GECCA) is progressing, but Government have announced that they are minded to postpone the election of a Mayor for Essex, originally scheduled for May 2026, to May 2028. The Government has stated that the delay is to allow more time between setting up their new Mayoral Strategic Authorities and holding the first mayoral elections, and for partners to work together and build strong collaboration before a Mayor takes office. Councils remain committed to working together towards the revised timetable to ensure devolution delivers for our region. Devolution represents a major opportunity to drive growth, attract investment, and create prosperity across our communities.
- 20. The Council has contributed to the principles for district engagement in the design and development of the GECCA during the period 2026 to 2028 (vesting day for new unitary councils), with an emphasis on how district members and officers should be engaged in governance and scrutiny, and the early work on upcoming strategies: Transport, Skills, Spatial Planning, Economic Growth.
- 21. The Head of Transformation & Projects has worked with the Corporate Management Team to refresh the Devolution & LGR programme structure, outline a programme of readiness for delivery within the Council, and update the programme risk register.
- 22. The Council has continued to engage actively in the design of the inter-authority programme by shaping options and systems for programme management, and contributing to Terms of Reference for programme workstreams.
- 23. The government-led statutory consultation on the four proposals for future unitary models opened in November. The programme responded at pace to ensure communications and engagement activities were mobilised and delivered to promote engagement in consultation to residents and key stakeholders. A consultation response on behalf of the Council will be developed and submitted in advance of the consultation deadline of 11 January 2026.

TCP - Community Uttlesford

24. 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.
25. Internal engagement with service leads has started and a programme initiation session is scheduled for January 2026. It is intended to shape the scope and structure of this service-led programme by end March 2026, with support from the Transformation & Projects Service.

TCP - Environmental Services

26. This service area has significant impact on all households through day to day services at the kerbside and in communities. Upcoming regulatory changes arising from the Renters Rights Act 2025 and the Environment Act 2021, particularly Simpler Recycling, together with corporate priority to protect and enhance our environment, have driven the need to establish a programme of activity.
27. The Environmental Services 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. Further Programme design workshops have been delivered with wider team members in December 2025 which have informed the detailed design of the Programme (to be agreed by The Corporate Programme Board in January 2026).
28. The emerging programme structure includes:
 - a. People
 - b. Process & technology
 - c. Recycling and waste
 - d. Environmental Health
 - e. Grounds & Street Services
29. The programme will bring together existing projects and seek to provide a framework to address wider challenges such as recruitment and retention of specialist skills and experience in Environmental Health.
30. The programme will be supported with dedicated resource from the Transformation & Projects Service.

TCP - Planning Policy, Process & Service Programme

31. 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.
32. Over the last three months, the Planning Service Programme has been initiated and designed, and is now moving to delivery, led by the Service and supported by the Transformation & Projects service. This complex programme provides 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.

TCP - Housing Service Transformation

33. Following transfer 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.
34. Work to formally initiate this programme is commencing in December 2025 and will be supported with dedicated resource from the Transformation & Projects Service.

TCP - Corporate Activity

35. 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.
36. Over the last three months, steady progress has been made on all planned activity:
 - a. **Finance** – have developed the draft budget and are on track to open consultation and present the budget for decision at Full Council in February 2026. A new Finance service structure is now in place to increase service performance and resilience
 - b. **Corporate Plan** – development of content for the 2026/27 Corporate Plan has commenced and is on track for governance scrutiny and decisions in February 2026
 - c. **Audit** – updates on Corporate Risk Register, Internal Audit and Counter Fraud presented to Audit & Standard Committee following previous presentation at Cabinet.
 - d. **Service Planning & Performance** – service planning for 2026/27 is well advanced and a new approach to quality assurance of service plans, performance indicators and identification of service risks has been trialled

- e. **Risk** – Updated Risk Policy, Risk Register and Report published to Audit & Standards Committee
- f. **U-Perform** – Stage 2 (mid-year reviews) in progress and compliance being measured

Next steps for Winter 2025/26

- 37. **Programme & Project Management** - work in collaboration with other councils to share programme management tools and techniques and explore opportunities to drive consistency and best practice.
Establish Transformation & Projects service structure, attract and onboard new team members and align to priority programme activity.
- 38. **Blueprint 2.0** – review scope and objectives of the Finance workstream. Initiate project to scope work on reducing the climate impact of estates and operations. Complete testing and finalise readiness for implementation of the new Finance System. Design and progress proof of concept tests of Robotic Process Automation. Implement the Learning Management System.
- 39. **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.
- 40. **Community Uttlesford** – commence programme initiation with the goal of shaping the scope and structure of the programme
- 41. **Environmental Services** – complete programme design and commence delivery
- 42. **Planning Policy, Process & Service Programme** – support service Programme Lead and Sponsor to commence phase 1 of delivery.
- 43. **Housing Service Transformation** – commence programme initiation with discovery workshop to inform scope, objectives and tranches of activity.

Risk Analysis

- 44.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
There is a risk that the concurrent LGR programmes in the eastern region make it difficult to recruit and retain	2	3	Promote in advertising the ‘unique selling point’ of a newly formed transformation team, emphasising investment in skills and development, and

candidates with project, programme and business analysis skills and experience.			through offering inter-authority secondment opportunities
There is a risk that introduction of this resource fails to deliver the step change in embedding programme and project practice and in the pace / progress of priority programme activity.	1	4	Strong sponsorship by CMT, leadership by Head of Transformation & Projects, regular reporting through The Corporate Programme
Individual 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.