

**Committee:** Cabinet

**Date:** Tuesday, 14  
April 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

**Key decision:** No

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## 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. Since the appointment of the Head of Transformation & Projects in April 2025, the priorities have been to:
  - 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 corporate programme and the Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) programme.
3. In November 2025, the Corporate Management Team agreed to form a Transformation & Projects Service and team order to drive forward the delivery of critical programmes and embed the Council's agreed approach to projects and programmes. Appointments to this team are expected to be complete by early May 2026.

## Recommendations

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

## Financial Implications

5. 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).

6. The target saving defined in the Blueprint 2.0 programme has been updated to align with the MTFP figure approved at Full Council in February 2026, which reflects significant changes in government funding. The target saving is **£10,024,000** required to be delivered by financial year 2030/31, with **£2,257,000** of that sum already identified for financial year 2026/27 and **£811,000** identified for 2027/28, leaving a balance of **£6,214,000** to identify and deliver by the end of the MTFP period.
7. 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. [Statutory Consultation Response - Local Government Reorganisation](#)
9. [Response to the letter from the Minister of State for Local Government and Homelessness regarding Elections May 2026](#)
10. [Response to the Government on the Structural Changes Order for Local Government Reorganisation](#)

## Impact

11.

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

12. **Programme & Project Management** is becoming further embedded across the organisation with the project management tools and templates now being used in a number of business areas.
13. Recruitment to the Transformation & Projects Service team is advanced, with an expectation that all roles will be appointed by early May 2026. Establishing the Transformation & Projects Service will increase capacity to a total of six full-time equivalent (FTE). In addition to the Head of Transformation & Projects, the team will comprise programme managers, project 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 including Local Government Reorganisation, and embed the Council's agreed approach to projects and programmes.
14. The Head of Transformation & Projects continues to engage with the Essex Transformation Leads Network and the sub-group for project management skills, which enables sharing of tools and templates, best practice and approaches to embedding the culture and skills needed for successful programme and project management.
15. **The Corporate Programme (TCP)** has been updated in line with the new Corporate Plan. The updated, five programme themes are:
  - Blueprint 2.0
  - 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			
<b>Corporate Activity</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programme Reporting for the 6 Corporate Programme Themes</li> <li>• Progress reporting for the core corporate cycles of activity: Budget setting, Service Planning, Performance Reporting, U-Perform, Risk &amp; Audit, Business Continuity &amp; ICT</li> </ul>									
Blueprint 2.0		Devolution & Local Government Reorganisation		Environmental Services		Planning		Housing	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workforce &amp; People Programme</li> <li>• Sustainable financial position</li> <li>• Cross cutting projects</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multiple phases of Devolution</li> <li>• Multiple phases of LGR</li> </ul>		Focus on Waste Operations & Environmental Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Process</li> <li>• Service Development</li> <li>• Delivery projects</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Process</li> <li>• Service Development</li> <li>• Delivery projects</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy</li> <li>• Process</li> <li>• Service development</li> <li>• Delivery projects</li> </ul>	

## TCP - Blueprint 2.0

16. As set out in the last quarterly update to Cabinet, 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 (subject to review). Other projects will be added as they are identified.

17. Delivery of the Workforce Plan workstream is progressing well. Key achievements over the last three months have included analysis of learning survey results, implementation of a new Learning Management System system (Litmos) and rollout of mandatory compliance training modules on the new tool. Learning pathways are being developed on the Litmos for each area of the business, and a new, consolidated onboarding and induction process is now being trialled using the same tool, with the aim to fully rollout over the first quarter of 2026/27. The new Learning Management System delivers 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.

18. The cross-cutting workstream continues to provide a governance structure for the London Road Offices Decarbonisation project and the work to ensure the finance system is fit for purpose. Delivery of the London Road Offices

Decarbonisation project is now underway and on track to complete the first phase of work in Spring 2026. In addition, the workstream has expanded with the addition of the following projects:

- a. Robotic Process Automation Proof of Concept commencing with discovery work to identify opportunities
  - b. Scoping work on reducing the Climate Impact of estates & operations
19. The targets for the Finance workstream have been updated to reflect the MTFP (see Section 6) as agreed at Full Council in February 2026. Full Council also saw the approval of updated fees and charges, car parking charges, vacancy rates and budget reviews identifying 5% reductions, which are critical to delivering agreed targets in Financial Year 2026/27.

### **TCP - Devolution & Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)**

20. 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.
21. The election of a Mayor for Greater Essex will now take place in May 2028. Greater Essex will receive a proportion of the yearly Investment Allocation from Government ahead of mayoral elections to assist with establishing the Greater Essex Combined County Authority (GECCA). 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.
22. The Council has continued to engage actively in the design of the inter-authority programme by shaping options and systems for programme management, Terms of Reference for programme workstreams and initial workstream discovery and outputs.
23. The Council has continued to engage actively in the government-led development of LGR through (see Background Papers section for links to relevant documents):
- a. A full consultation response to the government-led statutory consultation on the four proposals for future unitary models
  - b. Feedback to the Minister of State for Local Government and Homelessness with regard to proposals to postpone May 2026 elections
  - c. Response to government on proposed content for the Structural Changes Order which is expected to be laid before Parliament in draft form in the Spring before being formalised as legislation in Autumn 2026.
24. The government is expected to announce which proposal for LGR it is minded to take forward in mid-March. To prepare for this milestone, the Council has

been preparing a communications and engagement activity to support staff, communities and stakeholders.

### **TCP - Environmental Services**

25. 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.
26. Initial activity was delivered in 2025 to start to shape the Environmental Services Programme, including identifying key drivers, challenges and opportunities, and delivery of two member engagement sessions to set levels of ambition and explore priorities and ideas. 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. The emerging programme structure includes:
  - a. People
  - b. Process & technology
  - c. Recycling and waste
  - d. Environmental Health
  - e. Grounds & Street Services
27. In November 2025, the Corporate Management Team were provided with an overview of the programme and agreed to set aside a package of funding to support delivery of the organisation's response to the Simpler Recycling. The majority of this funding will be used to create capacity within the service to deliver the identified changes, and recruitment to identified roles is well advanced.
28. The programme will be supported with dedicated resource from the Transformation & Projects Service. Programme management resource is expected to be in-post in Spring 2026, following which the detailed programme design will be agreed by The Corporate Programme Board.
29. The approach to implementation of Simpler Recycling will be brought to Cabinet in April 2026.

### **TCP - Planning Policy, Process & Service Programme**

30. The Planning Service Programme 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.

31. Recent progress has included discovery work on a Digital Strategy, Action planning in response to the Building Safety Regulator Audit and training on new Local Plan policies in readiness for adoption.
32. As part of the people workstream, a grant has been secured for recruitment of an additional Graduate Planner, and a new Head of Local Plan & New Communities has joined the organisation.

### **TCP - Housing Service Transformation**

33. Following the decision taken in December 2025 to bring the Axis Housing Repairs and Maintenance Service to an early close, the focus over the last three months has been on transition of the services and staff and on mobilisation of the new repairs and maintenance in-house service.
34. A project structure was established at pace, with all workstreams feeding fortnightly updates to the Project board and to cabinet members. Agile decision making has enabled the service to increase resourcing and start direct delivery of routine repairs in advance of the formal termination of the contract. Dedicated workstreams for Human Resources and for communications and engagement have ensured that the staff impacted by the change are supported and that tenants are informed and engaged in future service design.
35. The wider 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. A medium-term improvement plan for the Housing Service's Property Services function will form a key workstream, together with a workstream for delivery of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund project for which performance and progress is currently under review.
36. Work to formally initiate this programme commenced in January 2026 with early work on programme outcomes and development of a detailed list of projects and deliverables.
37. The programme will be supported with dedicated resource from the Transformation & Projects Service funded by the Housing Service. Programme management resource is expected to be in-post in Spring 2026, following which the detailed programme design will be agreed by The Corporate Programme Board.

### **TCP - Corporate Activity**

38. The five programme themes are overlaid with a Corporate Activity layer bringing together reporting on the planning and progress for key, cyclical corporate activities.

39. Over the last three months, the scope of Corporate Activity reported via TCP has been extended to include ICT and Business Continuity & Emergency Planning.
40. Steady progress has been made on all planned activity:
- a. **Finance** – have delivered the 2026/27 budget which has been agreed at Full Council in February 2026, including response to changes in government funding arrangements.
  - b. **Corporate Plan** – The 2026/27 Corporate Plan has been developed and been approved at Full Council in February 2026.
  - c. **Internal Audit** – Audit & Standards Committee received an update on Internal Audit work in January 2026. The Internal Audit Strategy and Plan for 2026/27 has been developed and is due to be presented at Audit & Standards Committee meeting on 26 March 2026.
  - d. **Service Planning & Performance** – preparation of Quarter 3 Corporate Core Indicator reports is underway and will be reported to Cabinet in April 2026. Supporting Housing Service to develop performance reports to provide Housing Board with visibility of progress and performance.
  - e. **Risk** – regular review of corporate risks complete.
  - f. **U-Perform** – Stage 2 (mid-year reviews) completed and compliance reported to Corporate Management Team. Stage 3 (end-year reviews) underway.
  - g. **ICT** – Mobile phone refresh delivered at pace and 90% complete within the first month. WIFI at London Road offices updated by early March.
  - h. **Business Continuity** – led response to first flight from the middle East. Finalised action plan in response to Audit report.

#### **Next steps for Spring 2026/27**

41. **Programme & Project Management** – onboard resources to the Transformation & Projects service structure and align to priority programme activity. Revisit learning opportunities for the wider organisation.
42. **Blueprint 2.0** – develop action plans for the Finance workstream. Complete design and launch the project to scope work on reducing the climate impact of estates and operations. **Complete project review and ensure the finance system** is fit for purpose to LGR. Design and progress proof of concept tests of Robotic Process Automation. Extend and optimise use of the Learning Management System.
43. **Devolution & Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)** – respond to the government's 'minded to' decision. Support the Scrutiny Committee's LGR Task and Finish Group in its role providing oversight to the organisation's

programme for LGR. 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. Support establishment of Joint Committees and implementation teams as set out in the draft Structural Changes Order (expected Spring 2026).

44. **Environmental Services** – complete programme design and agree with The Corporate Programme Board. Commence delivery.

45. **Planning Policy, Process & Service Programme** – support service Programme Lead and Sponsor to complete phase 1 of delivery and set out detailed plans for phase 2.

46. **Housing Service Transformation** – commence programme design and agree with The Corporate Programme Board. Commence delivery.

## Risk Analysis

47.

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 candidates with project, programme and business analysis skills and experience.	2	3	Promote in advertising the 'unique selling point' of a newly formed transformation team, emphasising investment in skills and development, and 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.