

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILCABINET19 JUNE 2023Report by Director of Business Operations and PartnershipsUPDATE ON THE DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. The purpose of this report is to provide Cabinet with an update on the achievements of the Digital Transformation Programme during 2022/23 and to give an overview of plans for 2023/24.

RECOMMENDATION

2. It is recommended that Cabinet notes the achievements and future plans across the 3 areas of our Digital Transformation Programme: Customer Experience; Business Systems and Processes and Workforce Productivity.

BACKGROUND

3. East Renfrewshire Council has always been an ambitious council, aiming to be at the forefront of modernisation and digital transformation. In 2015 we introduced our 5 capabilities which set out the key areas we needed to focus on to effectively deliver our outcomes for local people and meet our ultimate vision of making lives better for the people of East Renfrewshire. The 5 capabilities are:



4. The Council's Digital Transformation Strategy for 2021-2024 was approved by Cabinet in June 2021 and focused on 3 areas (see summary at Annex 1):

- Customer Experience
- Business Systems, & Processes
- Workforce Productivity

5. This new Digital Transformation Programme launched in April 2022 replacing the previous Modern Ambitious Programme (MAP). A refreshed approach to governance and resources is now in place, led by the Business Operations and Partnerships Department, with representation from each Council Department, the HSCP and the East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure Trust as appropriate.

6. Overall governance of the Digital Transformation Programme is through the Corporate Management Team (CMT). They are responsible for ensuring that savings and benefits are achieved and that programme and project priorities, dependencies and resources are well

managed. CMT meet to discuss Digital Transformation on a quarterly basis, with update reports to Cabinet due at least annually.

7. Programme Boards for each of the 3 priority areas operate every 6-8 weeks. They are responsible for the resolution of risks and issues, ensuring delivery against the Digital Transformation Strategy blueprint for change and its intended benefits, the prioritisation of projects within the programme and ensuring delivery within agreed budgets and thresholds.

8. Following feedback from last year the Benefit Management Process was reviewed and is in the process of being updated to ensure the consistent capture of benefit information from project inception. Project benefits are held centrally and tracked through project delivery to realisation. In April 2023 draft Benefit Dashboards began to be introduced for use in Programme Board governance. These are at an early stage and there is further development required before these can be shared wider.

PROGRESS UPDATE – DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

9. Our services have made substantial progress across 2022/23 to progress our digital transformation ambitions, make efficiencies, improve customer service and modernise the way we work. Through the various projects outlined below this work has impacted many, if not most, households in East Renfrewshire. This section gives details of the key projects progressed in each of our 3 programme areas.

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

10. The vision for this programme is to provide a consistent, efficient customer experience, designed with the user at the heart.

11. This is driven by an organisation-wide Customer Experience Strategy. We are continually working towards improving our digital processes, including booking, scheduling and payments. We seek to design processes end-to-end, in an inclusive way, using the Scottish Approach to Service Design (SAAtSD). New technologies are used to improve the customer journey, based on customer preference, with support available for those who need it.

12. One of the top priority initiatives within the Customer Experience Programme has been the Unified Communications project which will modernise how we handle calls into Customer First. A new contract is now in place and, when implemented later in 2023, will allow our customer service team to handle enquires at any location, providing resilience for business continuity. This platform will intelligently route customer enquiries from various channels, including phone, e-mail, live chat and will allow us to develop chat bot capabilities using Artificial Intelligence. The new capabilities will also improve reporting and data to develop and enhance customer experience.

13. Another key area of focus for the Customer Experience Programme over the last year has been our digital customer experience project. We changed our website in 2020 and brought in a new Customer Relationship System in March 2022 and moved all existing customer forms and processes to the new system. We continue to further develop our online customer services and improve our response times.

14. The Customer Experience Programme will seek to continually iterate and improve customer processes. Examples of developments over the last year include new online processes for:

- Money Advice Referrals
- Out of hours homelessness

- Additional payment functionality (e.g. for bulky uplifts)
- Abandoned vehicles
- Short Term Lets
- Business Waste

15. In October 2022, a new online booking system for Registration customers was launched. This allows new parents to book an appointment for their new arrival 24 hours a day choosing a date, time and location that suits them. 93% of birth registration contact is now made via the online form and we are seeing a significant decrease in the number of interactions required to make an appointment, which saves staff time and is more convenient for customers who have rated the online process at 4.5 out of 5.

16. In May 2023, we extended this Registration booking service to include an option for customers to book an online appointment for a Marriage or Civil partnership. Early indications are showing a similar trend in how customers are choosing to interact with the Council.

17. Launched in the first quarter of 2022 our customer portal, MyEastRen, now has over 15,000 users (just 374 users were signed-up at this time last year), with 24/7 access to services such as Council Tax Online, Benefits, ParentsPortal (for schools) and Bin Collection information. There have been c.6,000 sign-ups to Council Tax online and over 5,000 households are now receiving e-bills. Around 30-50% of Council Tax mail is now received online, saving paper and postage.

18. We are currently consulting with customers and council departments regarding the introduction of new services and have opened a customer suggestion form online. Throughout 2022/23 we carried out several customer feedback sessions which, alongside the online form, gives the customer a voice when we are designing new/redesigning existing processes. This allows us to understand the problems customers face and what matters to them most.

19. The Education Department has continued to drive forward the implementation of ParentsPortal, seeking to improve the digital customer experience for families in their engagement with schools. ParentsPortal is a national online platform, developed in partnership by the Improvement Service and SEEMiS, providing parents and carers with access to a range of school services and the facility to complete forms and data submissions online, removing the need for manual submission of paper forms.

20. By March 2023, 92.7% of pupils across schools in East Renfrewshire had a linked ParentsPortal account, with almost 12,000 parents and carers using the platform, the highest level across Scotland. Given the significant uptake of the new tool, the department is continuing to work with schools to achieve benefits. So far, these have included over 6,000 annual data checks and over 8,000 permissions being granted online through ParentsPortal, removing an estimated 35,000 printed pages from the 'school bag run'. The Education Department will continue to work with schools and parents to achieve further benefits as greater functionality becomes available.

21. ParentsPortal has also been used to support the rollout of the under-22s free bus travel scheme, launched by the Scottish Government in early 2022. Whilst the initial sign-up figures for the new scheme within East Renfrewshire had been low, the Education Department worked alongside Customer First, Young Scot and the Scottish Government to identify opportunities to utilise ParentsPortal to encourage sign ups. This has provided a simplified process, reducing the need for evidence submission and supported a 40.9% increase in uptake this year, with current membership sitting at 61.9% in East Renfrewshire.

22. The annual application and admission processes for early learning and childcare (ELC) and schools continue to be developed using self-evaluation and customer feedback. For ELC applications, this has included the introduction of new models of provision, increasing customer choice and flexibility in how families can access their child's statutory entitlement.

Ongoing improvement is essential for both the Council and families in ensuring children can access schools and nurseries across East Renfrewshire.

23. During the year, we also continued to ensure our c.3,000 vulnerable telecare customers continued to benefit from their lifeline community alarm system despite the significant national transition from analogue to digital services. The Analogue to Digital Telecare Project made excellent progress during phase 1, closing the old analogue system and moving to a cloud-based system to enable digital service. East Renfrewshire is one of the first in the country to implement a truly cloud-based Alarm Receiving Centre and there were no significant issues or interruptions to the 24/7 life and limb service during the transition. The new system has reduced calls through use of a mobile app for telecare responders which delivers calls and routing information direct, freeing-up call-handlers from manually calling round responders.

24. We have now moved to phase 2, focusing on ensuring that telecare equipment in the 7 sheltered housing complexes is updated and replacing 2500 analogue alarms with digital functionality.

25. As the pressures from pandemic response work have eased over the course of 2022/23, the HSCP has been able to re-establish its ambitious Recovery & Renewal Programme (now 'Savings, Recovery & Renewal Programme'). This has included making excellent progress on the two main Digital Transformation projects commenced in the previous year:

- Care at Home Scheduling System Replacement
- Case Recording System Replacement.

26. Alongside this, as the programme has evolved, the HSCP has been determined to take on board some learning from the enforced changes to working practices during the pandemic. This has resulted in greater use of technology that has created a more efficient use of staff time and accommodation through the introduction of hybrid working practices.

27. For our Environment Department, there has been significant progress across a range of system and process improvements to improve on digital customer service delivery.

28. In March 2023, the ICT system for sports pitch bookings was replaced with a new cloud hosted system 'Pitchbookings'. This aimed to provide a more efficient service to paying customers by improving digital services, streamlining back-end administrative processes and creating a seamless online customer journey. The project has:

- Increased visibility of pitch utilisation levels to identify revenue lost and opportunities to better use land and commercialise the service in other areas
- Provided customers with self-serve functionality for booking, paying and managing their online account
- Moved to cashless payments
- Provided efficiency savings through introduction of automated refunds, automated subscription renewals and introduction of new integrated Stripe payment system for automated billing.

29. The former pitch booking system was also used to manage commercial waste bookings. There is now a project to replace this with a purpose-built system which will not only manage bookings but will provide new administrative functionality including an overview of cancellations, refunds, bookings, contract management and online portal/accounts management. This is expected to go live in summer 2023 and will provide improved reporting

and analysis, create a better customer experience, provide efficiency savings and reduce manual processing.

30. There has also been progression of the public access Wi-Fi initiative which is being implemented throughout sports centres, libraries and some corporate council buildings replacing the current public networks. There was a decrease in the project scope due to required budget savings so there will be like-for-like replacement as the current ERCLT contracts ends in July 2023, but no additional premises will be brought onstream at this point.

BUSINESS SYSTEMS & PROCESSES

31. The aim of the Business Systems & Processes Programme is to have efficient and effective business systems and processes enabled by digital technology and optimised across the Council.

32. There have been continued developments and improvements to the Council's core systems – Finance and Procurement, HR & Payroll and Income Management.

33. Over the past year, the focus of work on our Finance and Procurement system has been:

- Working through a range of process improvements prioritised by the Programme Board based on user need and the potential scale of benefits arising.
- Completion of a project that sees existing and new suppliers submit and manage invoices electronically via the Scottish Government's e-Invoice portal, allowing financial details to transfer seamlessly to the Council's finance system. With 31 of the Council's top 100 suppliers now on e-invoicing, this has increased invoice processing performance, reduced duplication, re-keying of invoice details to the system and reduced manual effort.
- For suppliers not eligible for e-invoicing, new standard invoice templates and digital invoice reader software has been implemented to allow suppliers to submit invoices in a standard format, with the invoice details scanned directly into the finance system. This has further increased invoice processing performance, reduced errors and re-keying of invoice details.
- Agreement of a new cloud contract with the supplier of our Income Management system, ICON. This move is expected to increase security, system stability and reduce system downtime.
- Completion of an ERCLT project to deliver an enhanced customer experience for making online payments for services, allowing refunds, retention of card details and the set-up of recurring payments. The project also integrated ICT systems to allow all financial transactions to pass automatically, removing manual effort, rekeying and reconciliation.

34. The Council's HR & Payroll system also continues to be developed and improved:

- In March 2023, 2-factor authentication was implemented for system access thereby improving cyber and data security.
- Following a procurement process, the Council has renewed its contract with the HR & Payroll system's supplier for a period of 4 years.

- The project teams have made further improvements to processes and reporting around HR & Payroll related data in the form of dashboards and improved absence reporting.

35. Following a substantial procurement exercise, the HSCP has implemented a new Care at Home Scheduling System (TotalMobile). Work to achieve 'go-live' on time was achieved under very challenging circumstances during peak winter demand on the Care at Home service.

36. The new solution represents an upgrade in front-facing technology. Benefits will include fully automatic scheduling (reducing manual scheduling for the largest workforce within the HSCP), increased efficiency and improved use of resources, a reduction in manual processes, enhanced reporting capabilities and improved task visibility and tracking.

37. The system also has the capability to become fully integrated with whichever new case recording system is chosen by an ongoing procurement process; further optimising holistic workforce capacity. Work is continuing on the replacement of our current Case Recording System (CareFirst). This is a significant undertaking for the HSCP and has been developed in a service-led, professional approach that puts service-users at the heart of digital transformation.

38. The benefits of the new system will include the implementation of a comprehensive, digitally-driven case management solution, which will also provide improved interface with NHS and other systems used by HSCP. The new system will also see the introduction of an online customer portal that will greatly enhance the user experience for the general public and introduce an element of self-assessment that will cut down unnecessary face to face interactions. The creation of efficiencies in working practices are also expected to create some financial savings.

39. The Environment Department benefitted from various server and system upgrades throughout the year to ensure systems are stable and secure with no risk of loss of functionality or productivity.

40. Following a hugely complex project, the Housing Management System was replaced in April 2023 (from OHMS to NEC Housing). This first phase included the implementation of modules to support key housing functions - Allocations, Customer Services, Estates, Homeless & Housing Advice, Rents, Repairs and Service Charges. Interfaces have also been implemented to allow integration to other key business systems including Revenues and Benefits.

41. Phase 2 of the project, anticipated for early 2024, will introduce further automation and dashboard reporting as well as a range of new features such as Private Sector and Planned Maintenance modules, Document Management and new online functionality for Housing Tenants.

42. The full implementation of the Housing System is anticipated to provide cost savings from the decommission of the Homeless Case Management System, efficiency savings on administering manual bidding process, increase efficiency of processing through automation and improve customer satisfaction through the introduction of online Housing applications, bidding for Housing, viewing account details and requesting repairs.

43. The Cemetery Modernisation project completed in early 2023, having successfully digitised cemetery records dating back to the 1800's and details of the condition and safety of headstones. There is a requirement under the Burial and Cremations (Scotland) Act to hold an electronic register of all burial activity. Digitising the records helps record statutory information and improve access to historic lair information. Having this information mapped using the geospatial mapping system (ESRI Arc GIS) allows the service to collect the precise

locations of lair and interment details. Office-based and operational staff can easily access records and log details either in the office or via hand-held devices working in the field.

44. Departments within the Council continue to work with the Scottish Local Government Digital Office and their partners around expanding opportunities for use of the Internet of Things Scotland (IoT) technology. The Council's ICT IoT expert co-chairs the national *Smart Infrastructure Group* fostering partnerships and collaboration on smart technology being deployed throughout Scotland.

45. As part of the 2022 winter maintenance programme the Council piloted grit bin sensors on ten bins throughout East Renfrewshire. The results of this pilot are currently being evaluated and will be reported to the Programme Board later in the year.

46. IoT capability is also used throughout the school estate to provide real time monitoring of CO₂, temperature and humidity levels. As a result of Covid-19, the Council requires to monitor the levels of CO₂ within buildings and rooms to reduce the risk of virus spread. Schools can now access this data in real-time and take measures to reduce CO₂ by e.g. opening windows to let in fresh air. This work has been sector-leading in Scotland.

WORKFORCE PRODUCTIVITY

47. This final Programme is about increasing the productivity and effectiveness of our workforce by enabling, embedding and enhancing our use of digital tools, including M365, to create; communicate; collaborate; store; plan; automate; analyse and report.

48. There are important information governance and technical considerations that form part of this programme to ensure ICT stability and sound approaches to handling of the, often sensitive, data and information that the Council holds.

49. Behind many Council reports is an infrastructure of hardware and software that enables the secure integration of data from various internal and external sources.

50. Over the last year we have continued investing in our tools so that information is accessible to the right people at the right time to solve business problems, make decisions and improve services that enhance customer experiences to achieve outcomes.

51. Within the workforce productivity programme there is a focus on automation, minimising data rekeying, developing single sources of truth about business information which we collect, store and use.

52. 'Perform' is a new in-house corporate performance management system where staff can create, view and update performance indicators and critical activities. By replacing the previous system, we have secured a small cashable saving, modernised the user interface and increased the efficiency of back-office processes for preparing mid-year and end year performance reports.

53. A new community learning and development system allows adults and young people to register for groups and programmes run by the team and update the details we hold about them. The new system means there is more time to deliver front line work in communities rather than processing over 1,300 paper registration forms each year. This has removed 100's of hours of administrative work from the team, enabling more time for frontline and partnership working.

54. Development of an online Contracts Register was completed in the last year. This has created a step change in how procuring managers and the Council's Procurement Team manage procurement exercises and contract information. This has significantly reduced the

time it takes the procurement team to collate its statutory annual report. This time saving is enabling the team to focus on supporting proactive supplier management that will in turn help deliver greater value from contracts. With information being held in a consistent and central place, we have also been able to start developing a dashboard to track and forecast spend against contracts.

55. We have also developed dashboards to help services ensure invoices are paid on time and to help Customer First monitor customer contacts through different contact methods and improve waiting and response times.

56. The Microsoft365 (M365) project enabled the transition to homeworking during the pandemic, supported virtual training, employee engagement and social connection, mainly through *Teams*, and continues to be a key priority area as we embrace hybrid working.

57. In the past year we have been preparing to expand the M365 product suite across the organisation. Departments have been engaged to understand their productivity and workflow requirements. The Council's ICT team has played a key role in making this technically possible for corporate staff who use a laptop, PC or council smartphone. ICT have been making improvements in the background to ensure that our information and service delivery are resilient, protected and compliant.

58. We have enhanced the training and support offered to staff by rolling out sessions based around real work challenges such as holding hybrid meetings, leveraging learning content and accredited courses from Microsoft and partners, and recruited a temporary Digital Learning Assistant to support users on one-to-one and group bases.

59. The Way We Work project focuses on embedding new technologies within Council buildings. The pandemic, along with the utilisation of modern technology, has seen an acceleration of changes to traditional working practices and environments.

60. Staff now have the tools to carry out their work in a location that best supports the service they deliver, as well as meeting their own needs. This can include the traditional office environment, home, and a range of remote locations. Some key digital equipment/software has been implemented within the last 12 months including Hybrid meeting technology allowing for both in-person and remote participation in a meeting or event, and Room Booking software which will be instrumental with the removal of private offices, so that staff can book out meeting space when required.

OUR FUTURE PROGRAMME

61. East Renfrewshire Council will continue to focus on digital transformation to become more efficient, accessible, and modern making improvements based on customer needs.

62. Whilst challenges continue to be faced in terms of capacity versus ambition and complexity of many of these programmes of work, we are more conscious than ever of the importance of prioritising this work to achieve best use of scarce resource. We will make more use of agile project methods to provide a more incremental way to manage change based on user needs and focused on chunking projects to get value to those who use the service as quickly as possible.

63. Through the Digital Transformation Programme, Departments are continually engaged in a process of project prioritisation looking at what the Council needs to do (e.g. contract changes and upgrades) and wants to deliver as part of its digital transformation journey over the next period. The ongoing review of projects in this manner helps us assess the linkages and sequencing of initiatives; the scope for use of national platforms or solutions wherever

possible; plan resources; identify gaps or challenges and ensure a balance of delivery and benefits realisation across the 3 fronts of our digital transformation strategy.

64. The section below gives detail on key projects we anticipate progressing over the next year.

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

65. The focus of the Customer Experience programme in 2023/24 will be to:

- Implement the delivery of the Unified Communications platform, including the roll out of the contact centre channels, initially focussing on telephony, e-mail, quality monitoring and reporting, with live chat and chat bot being delivered during a later phase.
- Continue to improve the online self-service and customer experience through the MyEastRen Customer Portal by giving customers the ability to interact with a wide range of Council services (including Revenues/Benefits; Housing and Schools).
- Integrate with back-office systems for the missed bins service, providing customer with near time updates, reducing the number of clicks to completion for forms and aim to reduce the number of requests.
- Ensure our vulnerable telecare customers will continue to benefit from their lifeline community alarm system despite the significant national transition from analogue to digital services.
- Introduce the appointment booking system to further services such as taxi vehicle inspections.
- Build on the success of current online processes to explore the opportunities to extend the online application process for all nursery children, including those aged under 3 years, to provide greater consistency in the customer experience as well as removing paper forms and improving efficiency of internal processing.
- Complete further work around the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) application processes with a view to streamlining, reducing the need for unnecessary data submission and ensuring young people receive their entitlement without delay.

BUSINESS SYSTEMS & PROCESSES

66. The focus of the Business Systems & Processes programme in 2023/24 will be to:

- Undertake a major upgrade of the Finance & Procurement system in autumn 2023 to ensure our systems are robust, secure and take advantage of new functionalities available.
- Introduce a new interface between the Finance & Procurement system and Housing's Repairs Job Costing System in Spring/Summer 2024 to ensure a 'single source of truth' purchase to pay process, financial control and reduce duplication.
- Leverage the functionality of the new cloud-hosted income management system to broaden the customer's ability to pay money to the Council using PayPal, ApplePay etc. supporting the Council's ambition to increase non-cash transactions in line with our Income Management Strategy.

- Continuously improve the HR & Payroll system including implementing a digital way of collecting and reporting sickness absence information within the Education Department ensuring a standard way of reporting, reducing administration of manual keying and improving payroll efficiency.
- Replace a legacy system that holds organisational structure and post details and exploring the best fit solution to manage flexi-time for staff.
- Adhere to new security standards set by the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard Council (PCI DSS), aimed at reducing card fraud. These standards must be fully met by 2025, with some requirements coming into force in March 2024.
- Progress the Council move away from traditional analogue telephone lines to digital line solutions. This impacts all analogue lines that run alarm systems, fax machines, printers etc.
- Prepare for the upcoming launch of SEEMiS Early Years, followed by SEEMiS Next Generation for schools. The current SEEMiS product, Click and Go, provides the key core system for all education authorities across Scotland, providing an essential database and management information system. The current product has been in place for a number of years and is set to be retired with the launch of the two new products in the coming years.
- Review HSCP processes to identify how technology can improve services and drive efficiency.
- Exploring the use of pre-paid cards for HSCP service users, a system which has been proved to yield significant savings in other areas.
- Progress the next phase of the Housing System project to automate workflows, introduce dashboards for management and staff, and to streamline processes.
- Continuing as a lead authority in the Scotland-wide programme for Internet of Things (IoT) technology.
- Introduce new ways for ERCLT customers to pay for library services using online and cashless services at libraries and at Eastwood Theatre. This will reduce cash handling and streamline links between financial systems.

WORKFORCE PRODUCTIVITY

67. The focus of the Workforce Productivity programme in 2023/24 will be to:

- Work with a strategic partner to drive further business benefits from use of M365, continuing the shift to cloud in a way that is stable, secure and resilient.
- Develop and enhance use of M365, including OneDrive, Planner, Bookings and Lists and encourage and support new ways of working for staff.
- Deliver interactive dashboards built on secure data feeds, with near-time visuals which allow relevant services to self-serve the information and new insights they require. This will include:
 - Development of a cost of living dashboard which will support frontline services to target resources on financial vulnerability;

- Deliver dashboards for Education Department including pupil absence and curriculum for excellence insights;
 - Introduce a mandatory staff training dashboard which will help managers proactively ensure data protection, information security and health & safety courses are up to date
 - Iterate dashboards for Freedom of Information (FOI) request response times and staff sickness absence to enable data driven service improvements.
- Revise our Microsoft 365 roadmap to articulate how we envisage these technologies supporting corporate priorities. In the short term we will be scoping and designing sensitivity labelling for information governance purposes and records retention in M365, updating users' software to the latest version and working to grow cloud-based collaboration.
 - The Way We Work project will continue to focus on embedding new technologies within Council buildings to increase staff effectiveness while maintaining a healthy work-life balance.

IMPLICATIONS

68. There has been significant progress in recent years in delivery of the Council's digital transformation strategy. The pandemic did impact capacity significantly in recent years and caused some delays to projects, but our aspirations to continue our ambitious modernisation journey remain as important as ever.

69. Change and digital transformation across an organisation as diverse as a Council (and HSCP and ERCLT) is a complex area. There is a complicated ICT system architecture and network of operational processes that sit behind the services that our residents interact with on a day-to-day. We must plan carefully to ensure that we are focusing on improving our high-volume processes whilst undertaking the routine work to keep our systems up to date, secure and integrated.

70. The use of equality/fairness and data protection impact assessments is a routine part of projects and Audit Scotland's recent [Local Government Overview 2023 report](#) concluded that "Councils should have a clear plan for strengthening their use of data to understand needs, make decisions and direct resources". It also concluded that "radical change is needed" and "councils must better involve service users and communities...as they redesign services" It also recognised that "digital technology will be a central component of future service delivery".

71. Budget challenges mean we must clearly prioritise our activities and resources to ensure we deliver benefits from projects, that they contribute to future savings opportunities and improve the experiences of residents and reduce bureaucracy. Learning from others' successes (and failures) will also help transition quicker and save rework.

72. Recruiting and retaining the right skills and experience is essential to the success of our digital transformation journey. Digital, data, technology and service design skillsets are in significant demand nationally and it is a challenging marketplace. Programmes routinely have gaps in key skillsets which means the need to prioritise resource to achieve the best collective benefit – this is a key function of the 3 Programme Boards, which must work together to make decisions and recommendations. We have also developed close links with the Scottish Local Government Digital Office and Scottish Digital Academy to ensure we can develop and enhance our digital, data and technology skillsets.

FINANCE & EFFICIENCY

73. Whilst significant savings have already been achieved, the very difficult financial circumstances facing councils are expected to continue for the foreseeable future so the scale of change will need to be maintained. In recent years, the Council has placed high reliance on its digital transformation programme to drive change and savings across all services. The Revenue Estimates for 2023/24 concluded that £0.652m (14%) of the Council's savings proposals for 2023/24 related to efficiencies or to the Council's digital transformation programme and the focus on the Council's 5 capabilities. These will be recurring savings.

74. Savings plans for future years will be developed by the Corporate Management Team based on the Scottish and UK budgets and will be reviewed to take account of any multi-year settlement information subsequently published. Whilst it is recognised that it will become progressively more difficult to identify efficiencies in future, the Council will continue to seek efficiencies through reviews and transformation initiatives wherever possible.

75. East Renfrewshire Council has a policy of always taking a prudent approach to the calculation of savings. Savings are only included in formal budgets once we have a high degree of confidence that they can be achieved (and in many cases are already in place through work in previous years).

76. The key principles behind the programme that will lead to budget savings are:

- Continue implementing our Digital Transformation Strategy, with a focus on customer experience, streamlined end to end systems and processes and greater use of M365 capabilities for productivity
- An increased focus on user engagement in service design and more community empowerment to provide services which put customers at the heart of provision, improving services and potentially lowering costs
- Improving the sharing and management of data across the organisation.

77. Projects are funded through a Digital transformation budget, which will need reviewed year on year as part of the budget process. The funding comes from:

- a regular drawdown from modernisation fund (£1m plus any underspend from previous years);
- recharges to Capital;
- a small number of revenue-funded posts including Programme Management Office;
- drawdown from HRA, IJB and ERCLT reserves as required;
- departmental revenue budget "top slicing", which may be required in future years as Modernisation Fund resources deplete.

78. The modernisation reserve was created in 2014 to fund change projects across the Council. In the early days the fund was topped up annually from underspend at year end. In recent years, there has been little opportunity to top-up so the fund has been declining in value. The Modernisation Fund balance as at 31 March 2023 has reduced and is now only around £3.4m. With future plans to use over £1.5m each year to support transformation staff and ongoing projects, consideration needs to be given to ongoing funding for these activities.

79. A report to Council in March 2023 highlighted the Strategic Impact of the Financial Settlement. It was noted that, "savings had been taken from the budgets which would normally provide the future investment to develop services. Training budgets, community engagement and digital development budgets have all been reduced and in future years if we need to take the draft savings, they will be decimated, putting efficiencies, services and delivery of Best Value duties at risk".

80. A digital transformation team and budget has been established based on the above, with all digital transformation project work being managed and funded through the budget. New projects go through an intake process to determine how best they are delivered – this will include project prioritisation, with the budget and skills dictating how much can be achieved in a given year. Programme Boards are involved in this prioritisation to ensure best use of ‘shared resource’ e.g. ICT, HR and project staff.

81. These 3 programmes represent resource intensive areas of work but, given the right input and commitment, have real opportunity to transform our processes and deliver efficiencies for the future. It will be necessary for us to regularly prioritise this work to ensure a focus on benefit realisation and to rigorously manage the limited resources we must support projects.

CONSULTATION & PARTNERSHIP WORKING

82. The progress and ambitions outlined in this paper relate not only to the Council but also to the wider ‘family’ organisations of the HSCP and the Culture and Leisure Trust. We will continue to work together to progress the key priority areas for digital transformation and to share lessons learned and plan resources.

83. We will continue to work in partnership with the Improvement Service and Scottish Local Government Digital Office to share knowledge and learn from other areas of best practice.

84. User engagement in service design, internal as well as external, is a key principle of our digital transformation journey. We will utilise the Scottish Approach to Service Design wherever possible to put users at the heart of change.

CONCLUSION

85. Today’s report demonstrates the very broad range of areas being progressed as part of the Council’s digital transformation programme.

86. The pace and scale of change across the Council and HSCP remains significant. This is driven by pressures on budgets; statutory and contractual obligations and our own ambitions for digital modernisation and improved user experience. Prioritisation, resource management and good governance will continue to be key to the next stages of our digital transformation journey, with a focus on customer experience, our business systems and processes and capitalising on the use of M365 capabilities to enhance the productivity of our workforce.

87. It is important that consideration is given to the long-term funding of digital transformation as the current reserve is insufficient to deliver needs and aspirations.

RECOMMENDATION

88. It is recommended that Cabinet notes the achievements and future plans across the 3 areas of our Digital Transformation Programme: Customer Experience; Business Systems and Processes and Workforce Productivity.

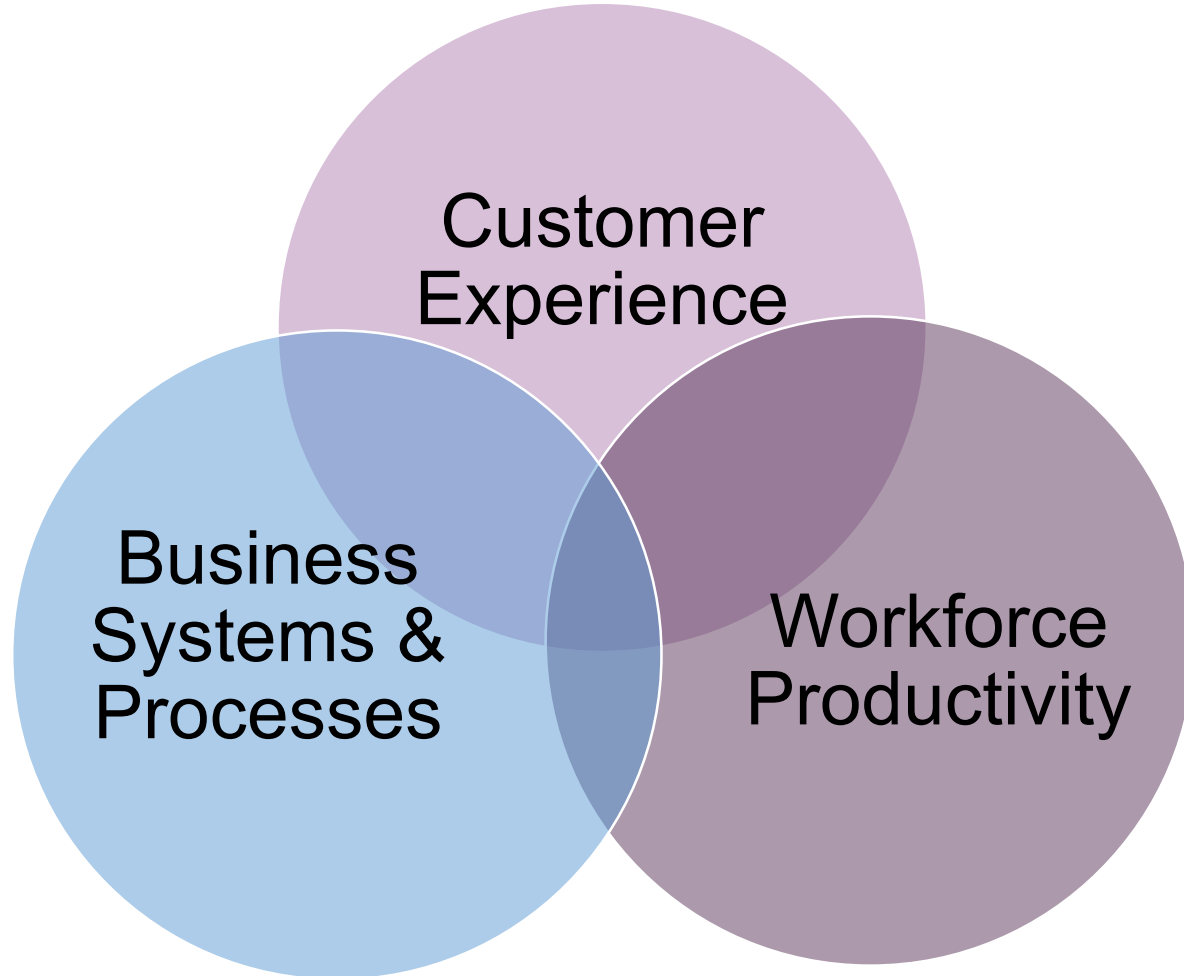
Louise Pringle
Director of Business Operations & Partnerships
May 2023

Report Author; Kenny Barr, Senior Programme Manager.
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BACKGROUND PAPERS

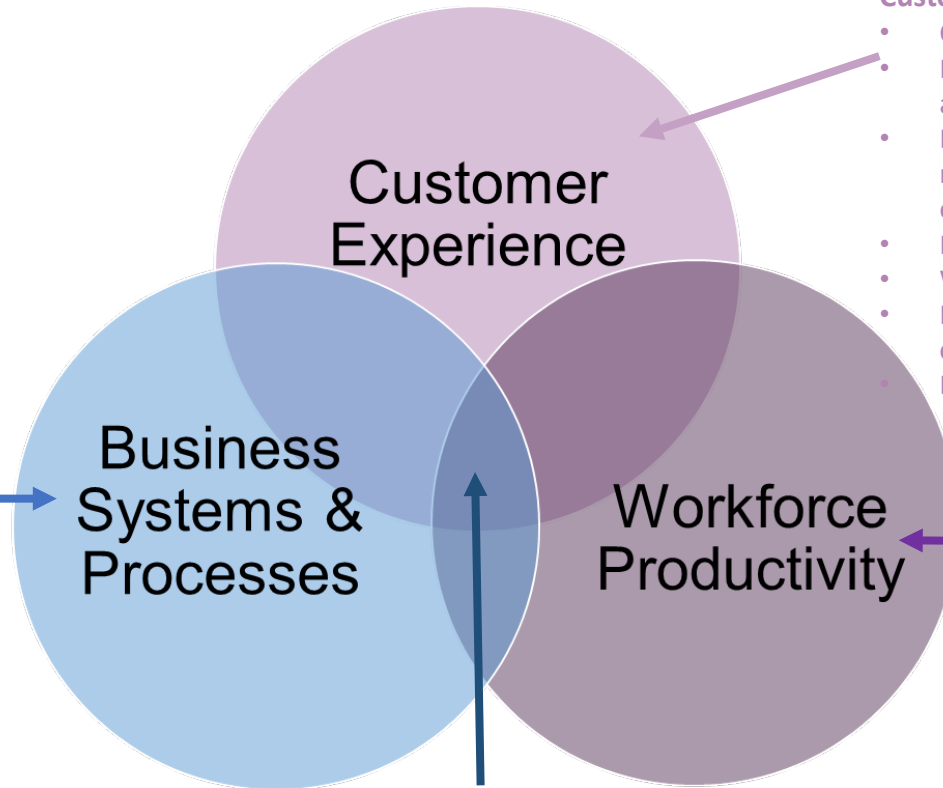
- Local Government in Scotland Overview 2023, Audit Scotland, May 2023
- Financial Planning 2023-2029, Council 1 March 2023
- Strategic Impact of the Financial Settlement, Council, 1 March 2023
- Revenue Estimates 2023/24, Council 1 March 2023
- Update on Digital Transformation, Cabinet 16 June 2022

Our Digital Transformation Strategy 2021-24 is based on moving forward on 3 fronts:





These 3 areas can be further explained:



Customer Experience

- Clear, organisation-wide Customer Experience Strategy
- New website & CRM as foundation for improved customer experiences across the Council
- Links to other line of business systems that the customer uses – replacement of legacy forms / processes and introducing common elements to improve customer experience
- Process improvement E2E using lean principles
- Workplan based on customer need
- New technologies to improve the customer journey, based on customer preference
- Better use of customer data

Workforce Productivity

- Getting the most out of standard Office tools
- New ways of working ('build back better')
- Embedding & enhancing use of Microsoft 365 - new tools to create, communicate, collaborate, store, plan, automate, analyse & report
- Technologies to support the frontline
- Increase organisational readiness for new business capabilities
- Empowerment

All 3 areas are underpinned by common methods, standards and skills

- Focus on benefits realisation, effort vs value
- Use of Scottish Approach to Service Design (SAAtSD)
- Use of national platforms/solutions where possible
- Focus on Agile project methods wherever suitable
- Small number of projects, with backlog prioritised regularly by leaders
- Organisation-wide ICT Strategy and focus on ICT security and stability
- Strategic analysis & insight
- Digital, Data & Technology (DDaT) skills
- Improved project communications & transferable lessons learned

Business Systems & Processes

- New Finance & HR systems as foundation for end to end process improvement across the Council
- Links to other line of business systems with goal of very efficient internal systems all integrated appropriately
- Process improvement E2E using lean principles
- Upgrades & opportunities for automation
- Use of Enterprise architecture to ensure we are getting the best out of our systems
- Clear 'owner' of each system
- Standard operating procedures (SOPs) for each process