

## **REPORT TO EXECUTIVE**

Date of Meeting: 6 February 2024

## **REPORT TO COUNCIL**

Date of Meeting: 20 February 2024

Report of: Chief Executive

Title: Annual Review of One Exeter Programme

### **Is this a Key Decision?**

No

### **Is this an Executive or Council Function?**

Council

#### **1. What is the report about?**

1.1 This report provides Members with an annual review of the One Exeter work programme and sets out the plan for the next 12 months.

1.2 The One Exeter work programme aims to deliver a well-run Council and contribute to meeting the requirements of the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). It was initially agreed by Executive in February 2021.

#### **2. Recommendations:**

2.1 That Executive recommends that Council notes the progress with the programme.

#### **3. Reasons for the recommendation:**

3.1 To deliver the Council's ambition of leading a Well-run Council as set out in the Corporate Plan 2022-26. This will include working directly with staff via the Strategic Management Board (SMB), the Operational Management Board (OMB) and Managers.

#### **4. What are the resource implications including non financial resources**

4.1 Delivering a programme of this wide scope and at pace will require additional resources. A Transformation Fund exists which has helped to fund delivery of the work programme. To date, part of the funding has been spent on resourcing the programme through secondments. These secondments will come to an end at the end of March 2024 and the work will continue to be delivered through the Strategic Management Board, the Operational Management Board and their teams. These two groups are brought together in the Extended Leadership Team working together on key aspects of the programme.

4.2 Where expert support or advice is required, third party support may be required. This has recently been necessary to support and inform the development and implementation of the Council's Digital Customer Strategy.

4.3 Some work within the programme plan will incur up-front costs such as staff development and support, or one-off implementation costs and these will need to be funded from existing resources or earmarked reserves. Such costs (recurring and non-recurring) will be clearly identified and set out in accordance with the agreed financial monitoring framework. Where appropriate, business cases for funding this work will be developed and approval sought as appropriate from Members in the usual way.

4.4 The work programme is also dependent on an investment in ICT, for example, the introduction of Microsoft 365, a shift to cloud platforms and the potential introduction of new technology to enable customers to self-serve. The Council has been working closely with Strata and partners at East Devon and Teignbridge District Councils to understand the scope of this work and what can be achieved with the technology already in place. The Strata Plan has now been published which includes a breakdown of costs to the Council.

## **5. Section 151 Officer comments:**

5.1 The report sets out the work undertaken in 2023-24. The One Exeter Programme identified in 2022-23 sufficient reduction for 2024-25 via the Service reviews to deliver a proposed balanced budget therefore the programme has been able to concentrate on improvements to the Council's core functions, which underpin service delivery.

## **6. What are the legal aspects?**

6.1 This report aims to provide an update on progress with the One Exeter programme and there are no legal aspects.

## **7. Monitoring Officer's comments:**

7.1 This report sets out progress on the agreed One Exeter Programme and as such raises no issues for the Monitoring Officer.

## **8. Report details:**

### **Background**

8.1 One Exeter is our organisational change programme and is a critical priority for the Council. The original aim of the programme was to deliver a fit-for-purpose organisation and to meet the requirements of the Medium Term Financial Plan. The work programme was approved by Executive in February 2021 and an Annual Review Report was presented to Executive in February 2022.

8.2 Since the last update to Executive in February 2022, the focus of the programme has broadened to reflect the ambitions of both Members and the new Chief Executive. As well as delivering plans for organisational change, the programme also has a strong focus on meeting the strategic priority of 'Leading a Well-Run Council', supporting staff and having a robust and resilient organisational core.

8.3 The programme is now structured around five work streams as set out below. These work streams are cross-referenced to the Council's Corporate Plan:

- Our People;

- Our Assets and Income;
- Our Customers;
- Our Services;
- Our Governance.

8.4 In order to reflect the strategic importance of the work, the programme is sponsored by the Chief Executive and owned by the Strategic Management Board. Ultimately, the Strategic Management Board are accountable for the successful delivery of the work programme.

The latest version of the One Exeter Improvement Plan can be found in Appendix A. It should be noted that detailed plans sit beneath this high-level plan.

The remainder of this report provides an update on the progress that has been made in relation to the work programme over the last year and the plans for the year ahead.

## 8.5 **One year on**

The 'One Council, One Team' strapline of the One Exeter programme is becoming embedded across the Council and the organisational culture is shifting away from silo working to one of collaboration and joined up working. This can, in part, be attributed to the significant work which has been delivered over the last year and detailed below.

### 8.5.1 **Draft Green Travel Plan has been prepared**

The draft Green Travel Plan has been prepared and is being considered by SMB February 2024. The aim of the plan is for all staff to travel sustainably to commute in and for all associated work journeys by 2030. A staff survey was conducted to understand how staff currently travel to and for work and the barriers that stop staff from using sustainable transport. An action plan has been developed to implement the plan.

Work has already started with the launch of a Staff Corporate Travel Scheme with Stagecoach South West. This entitles all staff to a 40% discount on their travel with Stagecoach South West.

### 8.5.2 **Employee Wellbeing Support**

Work has continued to ensure that all employees have access to wellbeing support. A new Employee Assistance Programme (Health Assured) has been launched which provides all employees and their immediate family members to emotional and practical support. This service is also available for Members. Between July 2023 and September 2023, 52 phone calls were made by staff to the provider.

Progress has also been made with initiating staff support groups, networks and activities. In the last year, a Menopause Support Group has been established and plans are in place to launch a Neurodiverse Network Group. A Craft Group, sporting competitions and a Staff Quiz have also been organised to encourage staff to come together.

### 8.5.3 **Values and Behaviours Framework**

The new Values and Behaviours framework has been launched and communicated to all staff. A staff group was created to develop the Values and Behaviours and reflect what's

important to both the Council and staff. The Values and Behaviours have been incorporated into the new Performance and Development Review process so that all staff will have the opportunity to demonstrate how they have modelled the behaviours.

Further work will be undertaken over the coming months to embed the new Values and Behaviours and ensure that all staff know what they are and the behaviour that is expected as an employee of the Council.

#### **8.5.4 Introduction of new Performance and Development Review process**

Alongside the Values and Behaviours, a new Performance and Development review process has been introduced to replace the former Growth and Development Reviews. All employees will be required to have a Performance and Development review on an annual basis and in addition to their regular 1:1 meetings with their Manager. As well as evaluating performance and setting objectives, the reviews will help to embed the new Values and Behaviours. The full roll out of the new process will begin in April 2024.

#### **8.5.5 Cost reductions identified by Service Reviews**

In December 2022, all services were asked to undertake Service Reviews to identify opportunities to improve the customer experience and to find a 15% cost reduction over the life of the Medium Term Financial Plan. Those services that put forward cost reduction proposals for the next financial year have successfully delivered many of the proposals put forward without having an adverse impact on service delivery.

#### **8.5.6 Decision Making and Accountability Review**

The LGA was invited to spend some time with the Council early last year to help understand whether decisions are being made at the right level and by the right people.

This approach is known as Decision Making Accountability (DMA). Some of the benefits of this approach are that it leads to timely decision making and employees have clear responsibilities and are empowered to make decisions as near as practicable to the point of delivery. This in turn should lead to a more productive and agile Council.

A summary of the review and the findings can be found in Appendix B. In response to the findings, a number of actions have been taken and are summarised below:

- A series of 'All Staff Meetings' have been held to set out the Chief Executive's priorities and to signal a shift in vision and culture
- The scope of the One Exeter Improvement Plan has been widened to include actions to strengthen the core of the organisation.
- Staff have been asked to return to the office for face to face team meetings and collaborative working.
- The Chief Executive provides fortnightly updates in the staff newsletter to keep staff informed about work taking place across the Council.
- There is closer collaboration at leadership level to break down silos and address cross cutting issues.
- The Digital Customer Strategy has been agreed. This includes plans to streamline administrative processes, improve ICT infrastructure and improve the customer experience. The plan is aligned to the Strata Plan 2024/25.

- Work will start on creating a Workforce Plan to help attract, recruit, retain and develop staff.
- A new Performance and Development Review process had been implemented to embed values and behaviours and identify opportunities for staff development

The findings from the review have also been used to inform the Senior Management Restructure (see section 8.6.10). A separate report will be going to Full Council in February.

### **8.5.7 Review of Employment Policies**

A number of HR policies have been reviewed and updated over the last year including the Drug and Alcohol at Work policy, Sickness Absence Management Process and Procedure, Probation Policy and Disciplinary Policy. This work will continue in 2024.

### **8.5.8 Digital Customer Strategy**

The Digital Customer Strategy was approved by Council in November 2023. The strategy is an important milestone for the Council and all services will be affected. The strategy has been developed in recognition that digital technology has, and is, continuing to change the way people live, connect and work.

A Delivery Plan is being developed and work has already started on implementing the strategy. House keeping work is nearing completion on the migration to Microsoft 365 and most telephone numbers and email addresses have been removed from the website. Customers are now directed to the main switchboard or asked to complete a 'contact us' form.

The Strata Plan includes ten enablers which will underpin the delivery of the Digital Customer Strategy.

Running alongside this has been work to ensure that customers who are digitally excluded can still access our services. Digital Inclusion is reflected as one of the ten key themes of the strategy and specific actions will be included in the Delivery Plan. Further actions relating to Digital Inclusion that could be delivered through the Council's Community Grants Programme and its work with Wellbeing Exeter will be proposed to Members in due course.

### **8.5.9 Review of Cross Cutting Functions**

As part of the Service Review process, it was agreed to investigate the hypothesis set by Service Leads that there were several functions delivered in a fragmented way across the Council. The hypothesis suggested that if these functions could be joined up, it would be possible to improve the quality of services and reduce the cost of delivering them.

Project Leads were identified to investigate the hypothesis in relation to health and safety, enforcement, debt management, cash and cheque collection, car parking and facilities management. During the year significant work has been undertaken to understand where the work is being delivered and how. The programme team have also created a generic corporate function blueprint.

In terms of deliverables, the work is focussed on three pieces of work:

- A proposal for a centralised Debt Management Function.
- A draft policy for the introduction of digital payments
- An outline business case for the creation of single corporate functions for Health and Safety and Soft Facilities Management, Anti-Social Behaviour and Sales and Marketing.

This work will continue in 2024.

#### **8.5.10 Customer Insight**

Research on understanding the Council's current methods of gathering and interpreting customer feedback and business operations was completed and reported to Council in November 2023. Ongoing work is under development to improve understanding of customer needs and expectations alongside further research to understand how the Council currently uses data and what it needs to change to become more focussed on and responsive to the needs of customers.

#### **8.5.11 Roll out of M365**

Since June 2023, the Council has been working with its IT Provider, Strata, to roll out Microsoft Teams and Microsoft 365 to staff. This will enable staff to work more collaboratively, reduce email traffic and storage issues and is central to delivering the Digital Customer Strategy. So far 734 staff have been migrated along with 263 shared mailboxes. As part of this work, staff have been asked to reduce the size of their mailboxes.

A trial has also been conducted in relation to 'Bring Your Own Device'. The trial has been successful and consideration will be given to whether the scheme can be rolled out more widely.

A plan to migrate all Members to M365 is in preparation.

#### **8.5.12 Review of Risk Management**

The Strategic Management Board commissioned Zurich, its insurance providers, to review the risk management arrangements across the organisation. The review focussed on six categories:

- Risk Culture and Leadership.
- Risk appetite and strategy.
- Governance.
- Methodology.
- People and Training.
- Projects, Partnerships and Supply Chain

The review found that the Council had a consistent understanding of risk and the reporting framework and that there was a positive culture to risk management. However, the review found that there were opportunities for further development in identifying cross

cutting risks and that training should be provided to Members who manage and mitigate risks as part of their role.

All of the recommendations identified by the review will be taken forward in 2024 and reported to Audit and Governance Committee in March 2024.

#### **8.5.13 Leisure Service Development**

A significant amount of work has taken place over the last year to reduce the cost of delivering the Leisure Service. Consequently, the cost of delivering the service has reduced from £3.8m to £2.2m. A number of actions have attributed to this cost reduction including a staff restructure, a price increase, revised opening hours and implementation of a new gym model. Savings will also be achieved from insourcing the work required to maintain the building via the Corporate Property Team.

Further cost reductions are proposed for 2024/25 and are on track to be achieved.

#### **8.5.14 Improved Communication and Collaboration**

Over the last year, there has been a focus on improving communication and collaboration across the Council. The Chief Executive publishes a fortnightly message in the staff newsletter to keep everyone informed about the strategic work that has been taking place as well personal highlights such as meeting and learning more about the front line teams.

An Extended Leadership Team has been formed made up of the Strategic Management Board and the Operational Management Board. The purpose of this meeting is to collaborate and work together to solve strategic challenges, consider the operational impact of strategic proposals and to share successes and good news.

In recognition of a new Chief Executive with a new focus and leadership style, a series of 'All Staff Meetings' have been held. The main purpose of the meeting was for the Chief Executive to set out her focus and priorities and to bring teams together, many of whom may not have seen each other since before the pandemic.

During the meetings, the Chief Executive talked about the One Exeter Programme including the work that has been done to support employee wellbeing, the response to the staff survey, the introduction of revised values and behaviours and a new performance and development review process.

The Staff Sounding Board has also continued during 2023 and has offered invaluable feedback to the One Exeter programme. This included helping to inform the content and format for the All Staff Meetings.

### **8.6 Proposed Outcomes - Next 12 months**

A summary of what the One Exeter Programme aims to deliver over the next 12 months is set out below.

#### **8.6.1 Further development of the OD/HR Workplan**

As the Council introduces a new senior management structure and moves to deliver its transformational Digital Customer Strategy, it will be important that organisational development and HR capacity is available to both staff and the organisation. In response to this, the Chief Executive has commissioned some support to help the Council to develop a HR and Organisational Development function that is able to meet the future requirements of the Council.

This will include the development of a People Strategy, the implementation of a Management Development programme for the new management structure and a review of all employee related policies.

### **8.6.2 Implementation of the Digital Customer Strategy**

During the next year the Council will work closely with Strata to increase customer self-service and create a single point of contact for customers. Work will also take place to understand and make use of the range of tools available within M365 and provide Council staff with the ability to integrate systems so that customers receive a seamless service. The existing Skype system will be going end of life in October 2025 so work will start on replacing Skype for Business with a new telephony system.

A laptop replacement programme will be implemented so that the Council can utilise Microsoft alternatives, deliver more value from its Microsoft subscription and access Microsoft apps without going via the global desktop.

### **8.6.3 Development of a Data Strategy**

Work has started on creating a plan to manage and utilise data effectively. The goal is to ensure that data is accurate, accessible and secure. The strategy will guide how the Council collects, stores, manages and uses data for decision making and performance evaluation and will be pivotal to ensure the successful roll out of M365 and all of its capabilities. Work will continue to develop and deliver the strategy in 2024.

### **8.6.4 Technology**

The Council has been working closely with its partners in East Devon and Teignbridge District Councils to set clear, joined up priorities in relation to its digital ambitions. Strata Services Solutions have used this information to develop a new Business Case for Strata. This has been agreed by the Strata Board and will be considered by the Strata Joint Executive Committee early in 2024. The delivery of the Business Plan includes investment in essential infrastructure to allow the Council to achieve its Digital Customer Service Strategy.

The Strategy identifies ten enablers that are required for the Council to deliver its digital ambitions.

### **8.6.5 Review of Cross Cutting functions**

A review of the Debt Management function has been undertaken and improvements are being implemented. It is proposed to bring a policy for digital payments to Executive in June.



A proposed model is being developed for the creation of single corporate functions for Anti-Social Behaviour, Health and Safety/Soft Facilities Management and Sales and Marketing. This will be presented to the Strategic Management Board in February 2024.

#### **8.6.6 Development of Performance Management Framework**

Work has started on development a new Corporate Performance Framework. This will enable the Council to report to Members on the delivery of the current Corporate Plan, help to inform the next version and form the basis of a Corporate Performance Framework. This work will be progressed in 2024.

#### **8.6.7 Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Review**

The Council will be working with colleagues in the Local Government Association to review how the Council complies with its responsibilities under the Equalities legislation and whether there are opportunities to improve. The outcome and recommendations from the review will be used to introduce improvements to the current arrangements in 2024.

#### **8.6.8 Accommodation Review**

There is still an intention to move from the Civic Centre to a different location and work is progressing to identify an appropriate space. The aim is to move locations within the next two years.

In the meantime, work will begin on improving the working environment within the Civic Centre and creating a workplace model that reflects a One Council:One Team culture and can be replicated in a different location. Over the next year, work will begin to uplift the Civic Centre, create hybrid meeting spaces and working zones, test a more compact model and understand future office space requirements.

Plans are also being developed to improve the working environment for staff based at Oakwood House and the Buoy Store.

#### **8.6.9 Customer Insight and Consultation**

The Council has recognised that to deliver effective services and to make decisions that meet the needs of residents, businesses and visitors it will need to consult and use data to be more responsive to what stakeholders are saying.

As well as continuing with the work underway to understand customer needs, immediate work will also take place to identify further opportunities to make cost reductions in 2025/26. As part of this work, the Council will consult with residents and other stakeholders to help inform decision making and prioritise spending in the future. A residents' survey is planned for later this year.

#### **10.6.10 Senior Management Restructure**

The Chief Executive has been working with the LGA to develop a revised Senior Management Structure. The proposed new structure is designed to ensure that the

Council is able to deliver on its priorities, implement its ambitious transformation programme, provide an excellent customer experience and lead a well-run Council. A report will be taken to Council in February 2024.

Should the proposal for a Senior Management Restructure be agreed by Members, work will begin to implement proposals at Strategic and Operational Management levels.

## 9. How does the decision contribute to the Council’s Corporate Plan?

9.1 The One Exeter work programme contributes to the following corporate priorities and plans:

Priority	Plans
Leading a Well Run Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Make it as easy as possible for more people to help themselves by providing high quality information and advice through digital and self-help services</li> <li>- Provide a ‘single front door’ for customers who need to contact the Council and provide high quality information and advice through digital and self-help services.</li> <li>- Continue to support our staff to shift to work agile and flexibly, ensuring we make the best use of the skills and experience of all of our staff</li> <li>- Employee Wellbeing Support</li> <li>- Review of Risk Management arrangements</li> <li>- Review of the Organisational Structure</li> <li>- Provision of value for money services</li> </ul>
Prosperous Local Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Continue to identify opportunities to improve the Council’s employment proposition and attract and retain staff</li> </ul>
Promoting Active and Healthy Lifestyles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Employee Wellbeing support</li> <li>- Development of a Green Travel Plan for employees</li> </ul>

## 10. What risks are there and how can they be reduced?

10.1 A detailed risk register has been developed. The top five risks identified can be found in Appendix C.

## 11. Equality Act 2010 (The Act)

11.1 Under the Act’s Public Sector Equalities Duty, decision makers are required to consider the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct;
- advance equality by encouraging participation, removing disadvantage, taking account of disabilities and meeting people’s needs; and
- foster good relations between people by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

11.2 In order to comply with the general duty authorities must assess the impact on equality of decisions, policies and practices. These duties do not prevent the authority

from reducing services where necessary, but they offer a way of developing proposals that consider the impacts on all members of the community.

11.3 In making decisions the authority must take into account the potential impact of that decision in relation to age, disability, race/ethnicity (includes Gypsies and Travellers), sex and gender, gender identity, religion and belief, sexual orientation, pregnant women and new and breastfeeding mothers, marriage and civil partnership status in coming to a decision.

11.4 In recommending this proposal no potential impact has been identified on people with protected characteristics as determined by the Act because this report is for information only.

11.5 Equalities Impact Assessments for each area of work that will impact on people with protected characteristics. A recent EQIA has been completed in relation to the Digital Customer Strategy and its impact on those with barriers to digital engagement and this is attached at Appendix D. The assessment will be kept under regular review by the Strategic Management Board to meet the continuing duty to monitor and review.

## 12. Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

12.1 The implementation of the One Exeter work programme will make a positive impact on the Council's carbon footprint. Specific projects are set out below:

Programme Activity	Impact on carbon footprint
Green Travel	Encouraging staff to walk or cycle to and for work will reduce the need to use cars and consequently positively impact congestion and pollution levels.
Agile and flexible working	The continuation and development of agile and flexible working will reduce the need for office space which will, in turn, reduce the amount of energy needed.
Microsoft 365	Microsoft 365 will offer the Council much more scope to collaborate and share ideas. More meetings can be held remotely reducing the need to travel and information can be shared without the need for emails or printing papers, thereby reducing energy and paper wastage.
Customer	More services will be available online which will allow customers to self-serve at times that are convenient to them, rather than during traditional office hours. This will reduce the need for customers to travel to the city centre for face to face services or complete paper based forms.

## 13. Are there any other options?

13.1 Each of the work streams identified in the One Exeter programme could be delivered in isolation by nominated work stream leads. However, without any strategic oversight or coordination, there is a very high possibility that double counting of savings or duplication of work could occur. In addition, adopting a joined up delivery approach, will ensure that

any unintended consequences that have an impact on other parts of the organisation, are identified at an early stage.

**Chief Executive, Bindu Arjoon**

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**Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)**

Background papers used in compiling this report:-

None

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