![Staffordshire County Council]

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday 9 April 2024
10:00
Oak Room, County Buildings, Stafford

The meeting will be webcast live and archived for 12 months. It can be viewed at the following link: https://staffordshire.public-i.tv/core/portal/home

John Tradewell
Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Corporate Services
1 April 2024

Agenda

1. **Apologies**

2. **Declarations of Interest**

3. **Minutes of the meeting held on 26 February 2024** (Pages 5 - 8)

4. **Digital Innovation & Strategy Update** (Pages 9 - 32)

   Report of the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources.

5. **Customer Experience Strategy update** (Pages 33 - 64)

   Report of the Leader of the Council and the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources.

6. **Cabinet's response to MTFS Working Group report** (Pages 65 - 70)

   Report of the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources.

7. **Climate Change Working Group report on Carbon Sequestration and Woodland creation - Cabinets response** (Pages 71 - 84)

   Report of the Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Change.

8. **Work Programme** (Pages 85 - 100)

9. **Exclusion of the Public**

   The Chairman to move:

   "That the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business which involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A (as amended) of Local Government Act 1972 indicated below".

   _____

   Part Two
   (All reports in this section are exempt)

Membership	
Tina Clements	Jeremy Pert
Mike Davies	Bernard Peters
John Francis	Bob Spencer
Gill Heath (Vice-Chair (Scrutiny))	Samantha Thompson (Chair)
	Mike Worthington
Jeremy Oates	Nigel Yates
Kath Perry, MBE	

Notes for Members of the Press and Public

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Recording by Press and Public

Recording (including by the use of social media) by the Press and Public is permitted from the public seating area provided it does not, in the opinion of the chairman, disrupt the meeting.

Minutes of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting held on 26 February 2024

Present: Gill Heath (Vice-Chair (Scrutiny)) in the Chair

Attendance	
Tina Clements	Bernard Peters
Mike Davies	Bob Spencer
Jeremy Pert	Nigel Yates

Also in attendance: Alan White

Apologies: John Francis, Kath Perry, MBE and Samantha Thompson. Cabinet members Ian Parry and Philip White.

Part One

32. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

33. Minutes of the meeting held on 18 December 2023

Resolved: – That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 December 2023 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

34. Local Joint Enterprise Partnership

The Leader of the Council introduced the report which explained that due to the imminent closure of the Stoke on Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (SSLEP) and the integration of its responsibilities into the upper tier authorities, there was a need to consider how the functions would be managed and decisions made across the geographical area. The report proposed a new joint committee with Stoke on Trent City Council. Terms of Refence for the establishment and operation of the new committee were appended to the report.

The proposals would be considered by Cabinet in March 2024.

The Committee was informed that current or scheduled projects would move to the new joint committee. No significant risks had been identified for the County Council. Risks for individual projects would be considered during the schemes project planning in the normal way.

Resolved:
   a) That the approach to form a Joint Enterprise Delivery Committee with Stoke-on-Trent City Council and the draft Terms of Reference for the Joint Enterprise Delivery Committee with Stoke-on-Trent City Council ("Joint Committee") be noted.
   b) The proposal, that ahead of the Joint Committee being established and once the reserves of the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (SSLEP) were formally transferred to the County Council as the accountable body, it was being recommended that Cabinet agree to the immediate ring-fencing of funding for the Growth Hub, Careers Hub and Local Visitor Economy Partnership as key economic programmes for the local area was noted.
   c) It was agreed that subject to the Cabinet decisions referred to in recommendation b) above being approved, the Prosperous Overview & Scrutiny Committee monitor delivery through the 6-monthly Economic Strategy Delivery Update, as the committee responsible for such matters.

35. Quarterly Integrated Performance Report (Q3)

The Leader of the Council introduced the Integrated Performance Report for Quarter 3 2023/24 which summarised the Councils performance and financial position against the Strategic and Delivery Plans.

The report detailed the main challenges facing each of the four service areas, notably Children in Care, SEND, and Highways. The report also detailed the forecast overspend of £5.4m (0.9%) compared to the previous forecast.

The main issues discussed at the meeting were:
   • The Home upgrade funding for off grid (mains gas supply) properties, appeared to be related to postcodes rather than any property that was 'off-grid'. It was requested that more information on this be passed to the committee members.
   • Early Intervention was still being delivered through the Building Resilient Families service and the Children in Care plan.
   • New Highway inspectors would being recruited, these would provide capacity to identify category 3 potholes which had turned to category 1 due to bad weather.
   • Land that was for sale within a members constituency was available to view via the Property Committee. Committee details - Property Sub-Committee - Staffordshire County Council
   • Steady progress was being made on the Climate change target.
   • Business startup rates had stagnated in recent months. The reasons why and the type of business affected had not yet been identified. A link to the monthly survey would be emailed to members.

- The Ofsted Report had highlighted the need to bridge the gap in knowledge and partnership working in order to have co-produced plans for children in care.
- It was felt that the use of national benchmarking for children in care information was more appropriate than regional as it was closer to the local profile.
- Members were informed that the Corporate Plan and Delivery Plan were being refreshed and this would change the reporting information in next years integrated report to this committee.
- Showing data for a longer period of time (e.g. annual or over 2 or 3 years) would be useful to see, particularly in EHCP and Category 3 highway repairs.
- Sight of the plan to improve the quality of care providers locally, as rated by the CQC, was requested.
- The detail on Treasury management would be reported every six months to Cabinet.

Resolved:
a) That the Quarter 3 2023/24 Integrated Performance Report be noted.
b) That data for a longer period of time (e.g. annual or over 2 or 3 years) would be useful to see an annual trend, particularly in EHCP and Category 3 highway repairs.
c) That the following information be provided to the committee:
  - The criteria for Home upgrade funding for off grid (mains gas supply) properties and if this related to postcodes.
  - Business startup rates - A link to the monthly survey.
  - The plan to improve the quality of care providers, as rated by the CQC.

36. Overview and Scrutiny Work Programmes

Members were reminded that the Committee, as part of its role as overarching O&S committee, had responsibility for developing and agreeing the combined work programme for the Council's O&S function.

Appendix 1 of the report outlined the O&S planned items for all four committees for quarter three. Appendix 2 listed the actions and outcomes of recommendations made from May 2023. It was noted that this was a developing piece of work and monitoring of recommendations would continue to be reviewed.

Resolved: The work programmes for the four Overview and Scrutiny Committees were agreed.

37. Work Programme

The Committee was reminded that the 8 March 2024 (reserved for any call-ins) would be followed by an informal meeting to discuss the Corporate Plan/Delivery Plan and the Community Strategy.
A copy of the notes taken at an informal meeting between Officers and members to look at Performance indicators for Entrust had been attached to the work programme for information.

Resolved: That the Work Programme be noted.

Chair

Staffordshire
County Council

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Tuesday 09 April 2024

Digital Innovation & Strategy Update

Recommendations

I recommend that the Committee:

a. Consider the attached Digital Innovation Programme Update, noting progress made in the development of this.

b. Provide comments and feedback to support the development of the refreshed Digital Strategy.

Local Member Interest:

N/A

Report of Councillor Ian Parry, Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources

Summary

What is the Overview and Scrutiny Committee being asked to do and why?

1. The Committee is being asked to note progress made in developing a refreshed Digital Strategy for Staffordshire County Council and provide any comments and feedback on to shape the development of this strategically important document.

Report

Background

2. Following conversations with The Leader of the Council, the Chief Executive, Senior Leadership Team it is clear that as an organisation we have aspirations to push the digital innovation agenda and establish and implement a robust pipeline of digital improvements across Staffordshire.

3. This ambitious new vision and appetite for digital change pushes the realms of digital adoption far beyond where the organisation has been previously. This includes examples such as; exploring the implementation of Artificial Intelligence, Robotic Process Automation, Virtual Reality, Large Language Models amongst others.

4. The attached Programme Update provides background to the development of the Digital Strategy, an overview of the digital pilots the organisation is exploring and a view of the role The Digital Team can play in supporting the organisation to deliver the strategy.

Link to Other Overview and Scrutiny Activity

5. The Digital Innovation Programme links to previous activity undertaken by Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee concerning the Strategic Plan and priorities outlined in the Corporate Delivery Plan.

Community Impact

6. Community Impact Assessments (CIA) will be developed and reviewed as appropriate, for individual projects identified as part of the programme.

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Digital Programme – April Update

Contact Details

Assistant Director: Lynsey Bissell, Assistant Director, Strategy & Transformation

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Staffordshire County Council

Digital Innovation Update

Digital Roadmap for Staffordshire 2024-29

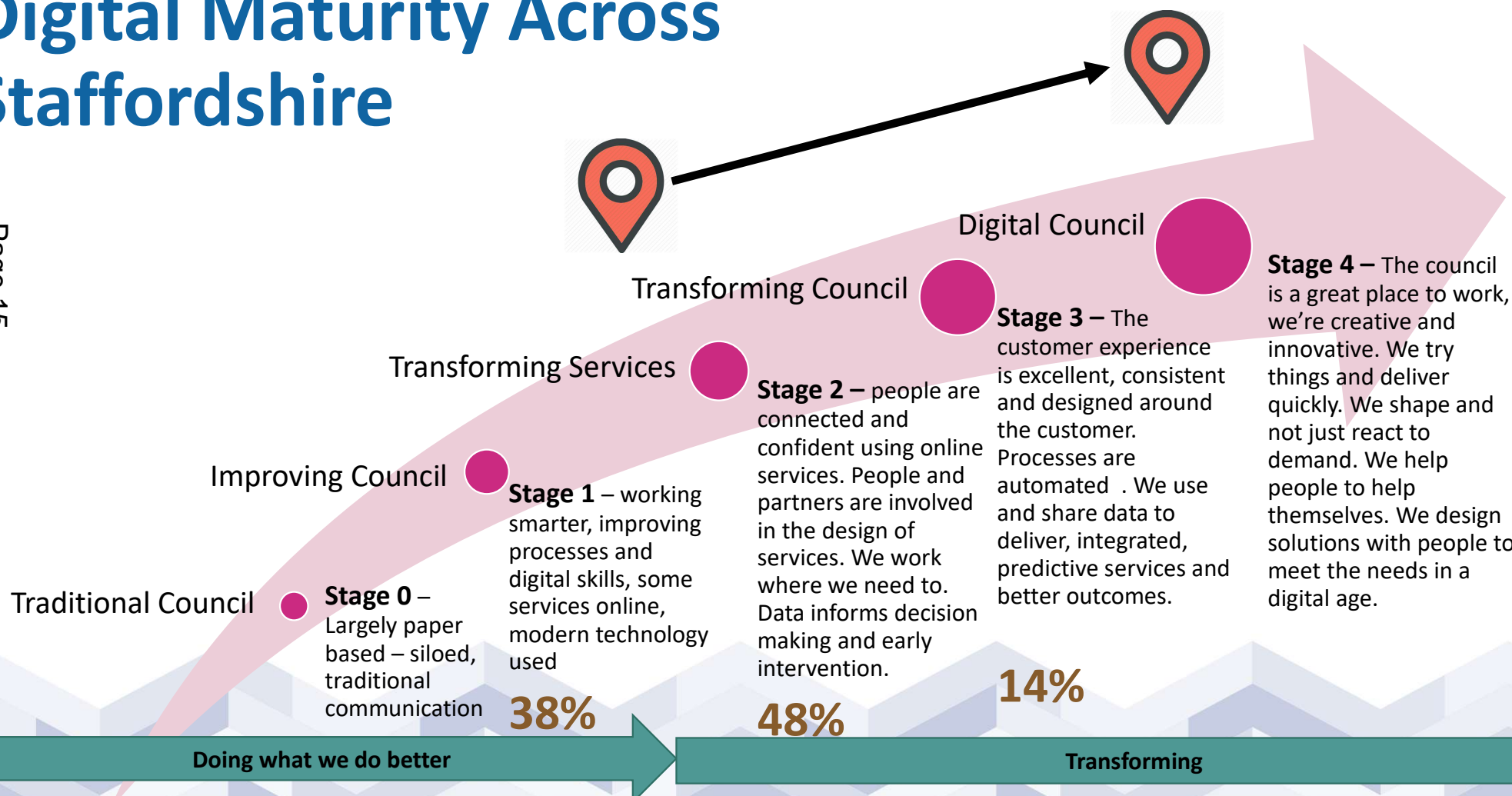Cllr Ian Parry / John Tradewell / Lynsey Bissell

April 2024

Objectives

1. Provide an update on progress to date

2. Seek your feedback to help us shape the developing digital strategy

3. Opportunity for O&S to challenge/provide thoughts on the developing digital strategy pillars

4. Showcase some of the exciting new innovations we are actively exploring

Staffordshire
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Digital Strategy: Progress to Date

Current Organisational Digital Challenges

1. **The Pace and Understanding of Digital Innovations** - As new technologies continue to emerge and develop it proves difficult for a large public sector organisation to remain up to date with digital innovations.

2. **Interconnectivity –** Pockets of officers understand the digital opportunities and the "art of the possible", the challenge is connecting the innovations to the business problems across the organisation.

3. **Interdependencies** – Digital change and transformation taking place across the organisation can be siloed at times, causing duplication of effort and resource as well as challenges for our ICT architecture.

4. **End State -** Current strategy does not articulate our end state and where we want to be as an organisation.

Digital Maturity Across Staffordshire

Digital Council

Transforming Council

Transforming Services

Improving Council

Traditional Council

Stage 0 – Largely paper based – siloed, traditional communication

38%

Stage 1 – working smarter, improving processes and digital skills, some services online, modern technology used

Stage 2 – people are connected and confident using online services. People and partners are involved in the design of services. We work where we need to. Data informs decision making and early intervention.

48%

Stage 3 – The customer experience is excellent, consistent and designed around the customer. Processes are automated . We use and share data to deliver, integrated, predictive services and better outcomes.

14%

Stage 4 – The council is a great place to work, we're creative and innovative. We try things and deliver quickly. We shape and not just react to demand. We help people to help themselves. We design solutions with people to meet the needs in a digital age.

Doing what we do better

Transforming

Case for Change

Develop an ambitious agenda for digital adoption, maximise the use of digital innovations to transform Staffordshire County Council into a modern, future facing organisation; using digital to enhance service provision and the customer experience.

- We will…develop a next-generation digital strategy that aims to transform our customer experience and drive efficiency and productivity.

- We will…develop and realise a digital delivery plan that focusses on implementing high impact digital improvement projects that transforms our customer interface, automation of systems, generating financial benefits and improving customer satisfaction.

Staffordshire County Council

Journey So Far

Engagement
- Commenced over Summer 2023
- SLT / WLT Sessions
- 34 x 1-2-1's with key stakeholders
- 12 x wider workforce strategy engagement sessions

Research
- Outward look at what other LA's are doing / have done Digitally
- What can we learn from others?
- Analysis of our current digital programme

Development
- Senior Leadership Conference – 11th October
- Development of "Art of the Possible" and Strategy
- Workshops / Use Case Development

Pilot Scoping & Development
- Microsoft Co-Pilot
- Digital Translation Service
- Utilising AI to develop SEND EHCPs
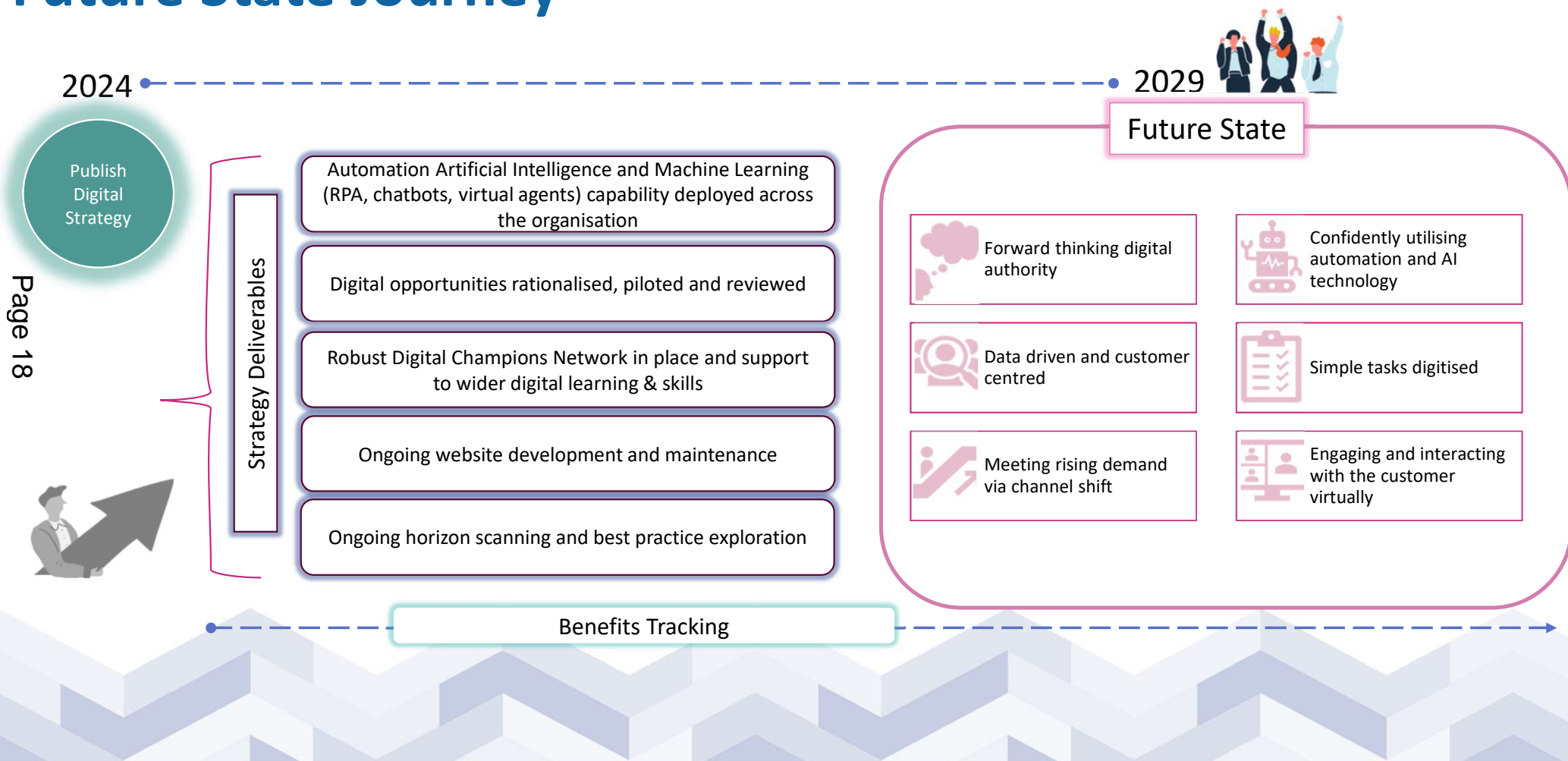- Expanding RPA Offer

SLT Approval
- Review & expand Digital Team's role
- Shape and deliver a pipeline of digital opportunity

January-February 2024

Engagement with the wider organisation around how the refreshed digital strategy can support the workforce to succeed

Future State Journey

2024 ········· **2029**

Future State

Publish Digital Strategy

Strategy Deliverables

Automation Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning (RPA, chatbots, virtual agents) capability deployed across the organisation

Digital opportunities rationalised, piloted and reviewed

Robust Digital Champions Network in place and support to wider digital learning & skills

Ongoing website development and maintenance

Ongoing horizon scanning and best practice exploration

Forward thinking digital authority

Confidently utilising automation and AI technology

Data driven and customer centred

Simple tasks digitised

Meeting rising demand via channel shift

Engaging and interacting with the customer virtually

Benefits Tracking

Staffordshire County Council

Developing The Digital Team, Pipeline & Strategy

Re-positioning The Digital Team

Support the organisation to deliver the Digital Strategy

Oversee and manage Digital Pipeline & Digital Business Case Development

Coordinate/Lead Digital Activity & Exploration

Embed a holistic and consistent organisational approach to Digital Innovation

Digital Expertise (Automation, Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning)

Business Cases

Digital Vision

Our vision for Digital across Staffordshire is...

> "Driving digital excellence to enhance our services, fostering inclusivity and building a smarter, more connected future for our community."

To deliver on that vision we are seeking to pursue six strategic pillars:

Digital Pillars					
Digital Champions	Digital Council	Digital Place	Digital Inclusion	Digital Data	Digital Pipeline

![Staffordshire County Council]

Digital Champions

"Empowering our staff through innovation, cultivating a culture of digital fluency to support our teams navigating the evolving digital landscape."

Objectives

Empowerment: Foster a culture of digital empowerment by equipping team members with the forums, access to skills development and tools needed to excel in the digital landscape.

Advocate Innovation: Drive innovation across business areas by championing digital solutions and advocating for the safe adoption of emerging technology.

Collaborative Leadership: Cultivate a collaborative leadership approach, encouraging teams to leverage digital capabilities for enhanced efficiency and outcomes.

Deliverables

Digital Champions Network
- Further development of our Digital Champions Network
- Define and embed the role of Digital Champions
- Implement strategies for leveraging the Digital Champions Network to support digital projects.

Continuous Improvement & Feedback Mechanisms
- Establish feedback loops and continuous improvement mechanisms to enhance digital practices
- Provide an opportunity to capture 'staff voice' to capture ideas and explore future digital innovations.

Digital Council

"Improving access to information and resident's services. Making sure that council systems are easy to use for all residents and internal processes are as simple and as effective as they can be."

Objectives

User-Centric Accessibility: Strive to enhance accessibility to information and services for residents, placing a strong emphasis on user-centric design to ensure a seamless and intuitive experience.

Process Optimisation: Lead efforts to streamline and simplify council processes, making them more efficient and user friendly for residents and internal partners.

Strategic Partnerships: Forge strategic partnerships with technology providers and community organisations to leverage expertise and resources enhancing the overall effectiveness of digital initiatives.

Deliverables

Website Maintenance & Improvement
- Identify areas for improvement for the organisation's website
- Embed strategies for regular website maintenance to ensure optimal performance, security, and compliance.
- Explore ideas for enhancing user engagement

Automation Development
- Exploration & implementation of RPA, AI, Chatbots, and Virtual Agents.
- Scale automation across the organisation to streamline workflows and reduce manual tasks.
- Identify opportunities to implement automation technologies to improve efficiency, reduce operational costs, and enhance the overall digital experience for both internal and external stakeholders.

Evolution of M365
- Wider exploration of M365 e.g. Copilot and Power Automate.
- Understand potential impact of these tools on day-to-day operations, collaboration, and workflow optimisation.
- Define approach for adopting and integrating M365 advancements into existing processes

Digital Place

"Having consistent technology and connectivity available that is accessible for both businesses and residents."

Objectives	Deliverables
Robust Connectivity: Develop digital infrastructure that ensures reliable and high-speed connectivity for the majority of residents that lays the foundation for seamless communication and data transfer across Staffordshire. **Future Readiness:** Prepare the digital infrastructure of Staffordshire that enables faster and more reliable connectivity to support emerging innovations and technology.	**Increased Connectivity** • Continue to understand current state of connectivity within the County and deliver on aspirations for increased connectivity. • Identify potential challenges related to connectivity and develop solutions to mitigate. **Accelerate Gigabit-Capable Tech & Infrastructure** • Implement strategies to accelerate implementation of gigabit-capable technology. • Explore the benefits of gigabit capability, such as faster data transfer, improved connectivity for remote work, and remote healthcare. **Promote the Opportunities and Benefits of Digital Infrastructure** • Understand the opportunities and benefits associated with robust digital infrastructure within the County. • Showcase how improved digital infrastructure can positively impact residents' lives. • Promote awareness and understanding of the advantages of investing in digital infrastructure. • Encourage dialogue on potential collaborative initiatives, both internally and externally, that can further enhance the County's digital infrastructure and contribute to our overall digital place.

Digital Inclusion

"Identifying digitally excluded residents, providing access to devices and digital skills where possible to enable residents to safely participate in the digital world."

Objectives	

Collaborative Partnerships: Form partnerships with community organisations, businesses and education partners to create a collaborative ecosystem focussed on addressing digital inclusion challenges.

Accessible Devices and Technology: Promote the development and availability of accessible devices and technologies to accommodate diverse needs and ensure that technology across Staffordshire is inclusive for all.

Inclusive Design Principles: Encourage the adoption of inclusive design principles in digital products and services, ensuring that technology is designed to be usable by people with a wide range of abilities and disabilities.

Deliverables

Increased Digital Inclusion for Residents
- Explore the current landscape of digital inclusion within the community, identifying gaps and challenges.
- Implement initiatives to increase digital inclusion for residents
- Seek input on specific programs or outreach efforts that could address the diverse needs of residents.

Improved Access to Digital IAG and Support
- Examine the existing channels for providing digital IAG and support to residents.
- Introduce enhancements or innovations in delivering digital IAG.
- Explore ways to improve the accessibility and effectiveness of digital support services.

Improved Outcomes for People at Risk of Digital Exclusion
- Identify groups / individuals at risk of digital exclusion
- Explore collaborative efforts with community organisations, educational institutions, and local businesses to create tailored solutions for those at risk.
- Understand the benefits of improved digital inclusion on overall community well-being, economic participation, and social connectivity.
- Monitor success and continuously adapt initiatives to address the evolving needs of residents at risk of digital exclusion.

Digital Data

"Using our data to better understand our customers and improve the way we deliver services by making quick and robust decisions for residents."

Objectives

Customer-Centric Data Collection: Develop strategies for collecting customer-centric data that provides valuable insights into preferences, behaviours, and needs, enabling a more nuanced understanding of residents that inform future solutions.

Continuous Learning and Adaptation: Establish a culture of continuous learning, using customer data insights to adapt strategies, innovate services and stay responsive to evolving resident needs.

Agile Decision-Making Culture: Foster an agile decision-making culture within the organisation, encouraging teams to use customer data for swift and informed decisions that enhance service delivery.

Deliverables

Development of the Centre for Data Analytics
- Continue to develop the Staffordshire Centre for Data Analytics.
- Position the centre to advance data-driven initiatives, foster innovation, improve services and promote data literacy.
- Seek input on key focus areas, potential partnerships, and the desired impact of the Staffordshire Centre for Data Analytics on the organisation's overall data capabilities.

Data Strategy for the Council
- Define the key components and objectives of the Data Strategy for the Council.
- Establish the strategic priorities for data management.
- Seek input on how the Data Strategy aligns with the broader organisational goals.

Utilising Data Across systems to provide a Single View
- Explore the concept of creating a single view through the integration.
- Understand the benefits / challenges to achieving a unified perspective through data integration.
- Identify use cases and scenarios where a single view of data could enhance operational efficiency, collaboration, and decision-making.
- Implement strategies, technologies, and collaborative approaches to overcome challenges and successfully implement integration of data across systems.

Digital Pipeline

"Rationalise and support delivery of the organisation's dynamic digital delivery plan."

Objectives

Collaborative Development: Foster collaboration among cross-functional team involved in the digital pipeline, promoting synergy and effective teamwork to support the dynamic nature of the delivery plan.

Strategic Alignment: Ensure that the digital pipeline aligns closely with the organisation's strategic plan and Digital Strategy supporting the strategic goals and initiatives outlines.

Performance Monitoring: Implement robust monitoring and reporting mechanisms to track the performance of the digital pipeline, providing visibility into the progress and impact of digital initiatives outlined in the delivery plan.

Deliverables

Rationalise and Prioritise Pipeline of Digital Projects
- Implement a process to rationalise and prioritise digital project pipeline.
- Agree criteria for project prioritisation.
- Streamline the pipeline to ensure optimal resource allocation and successful delivery.

Manage, Report, and Escalate Exceptions
- Introduce mechanisms for managing, reporting, and escalating exceptions within the digital project pipeline.
- Agree strategies for effective communication and collaboration among project teams and stakeholders when exceptions arise.
- Explore the role of reporting in providing transparency and accountability.

Digital Pilot Exploration
- Delve into the concept of digital pilot exploration.
- Establish criteria for selecting projects suitable for pilot exploration and the process for evaluating their feasibility and success.
- Capture lessons learned from digital pilot initiatives to enhance the effectiveness of future explorations.
- Create a culture of experimentation and learning within the organisation to drive continuous improvement in digital project implementation.

Feedback from O&S Committee

Staffordshire County Council

New Digital pilots we're exploring

Pilot Scoping

Microsoft Co-Pilot

Microsoft Copilot is an AI-powered assistant that works across Microsoft applications and experiences. It can answer queries, assist with research, and provide summaries of various content. We are actively exploring it's application and implementation across a range of teams in the organisation to explore what efficiencies can be unlocked with it's deployment.

Robotic Process Automation
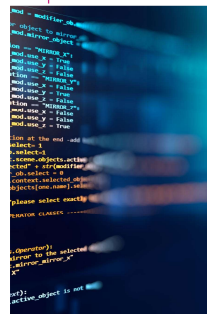
Expanding upon the RPA pilot initiated last year (within ASC and Finance) to ready The Digital Team and the wider organisation for a wider rollout and adoption. Focussed on back office functions where clear efficiencies, benefits and ROI can be unlocked. Developing a centre of excellence to embed the use of this technology as Business As Usual.

Digital Translation Service

Exploring the adoption of a digital platform/technology that utilises generative AI to automatically translate documents into multiple languages and produces easy read documents. Working across a number of business areas to reduce current service translation costs and increase the speed and efficiency of translation.

Producing Education Health & Care Plans Using AI

Working with AI providers and other local authorities to explore the adoption of Artificial Intelligence and digital technologies to understand the opportunities of deploying AI to produce EHCPs faster and more efficiently.

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Next Steps

Digital Strategy Sign Off - Next Steps

- Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee - 9th April 2024

- Full SLT – 17th June 2024

- Pre-Cabinet – 3rd July 2024

- Full Cabinet – 7th July 2024

Staffordshire
County Council

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Tuesday 09 April 2024

Customer Experience Strategy update

Recommendations

I recommend that the Committee:

a. Consider and provide your comments on defining the 'Staffordshire Customer Experience'.

b. Consider and provide your comments on the Customer Experience (CX) Maturity Model.

c. Consider and provide your comments on the Roadmap.

d. Consider and provide your comments on the anticipated deliverables.

Local Member Interest:

N/A

Report of Councillor Alan White, Leader of the Council and Councillor Ian Parry, Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources

Summary

What is the Overview and Scrutiny Committee being asked to do and why?

1. Consider and provide your comments on defining the 'Staffordshire Customer Experience'. As representatives of the Staffordshire Customer, you are in a key position to provide insight and overview on what is most important in this strategic plan.

2. Consider and provide your comments on the Customer Experience (CX) Maturity Model. Do you agree that this model will appropriately demonstrate how mature Staffordshire centricity is and is it the right mechanism to demonstrate where we want to be?

3. Consider and provide your comments on the Roadmap. Specifically does the roadmap reflect the pace you think is necessary to deliver such a complex piece of work?

4. Consider and provide your comments on the anticipated deliverable details below. Specifically do these benefits reflect the type of activity you feel should be monitored and measured? Are there any other benefits you think would be more appropriate or missing?

Report

Background

5. Staffordshire's vision is to be an "innovative, ambitious, and sustainable county, where everyone has the opportunity to prosper, be healthy and happy". One of the ways that we have pledged to do this is by "Encouraging and listening to our communities, partners and business, working together to improve our county".

6. Customer Experience (CX) encapsulates everything that we can do to deliver this pledge by putting our residents first, improving their journeys through the services that we offer and serving their needs.

7. Our CX should be purposefully designed reflecting the following considerations:

   a. **Rational experience** – this accounts for half the typical Customer Experience, things like delivery times, how quickly calls are answered and how easy it is to 'do business with' us as an organisation.
   b. **Emotional experience** – a well-designed customer experience goes beyond the rational attributes of the literal service (the 'what'). A resident will feel emotions undertaking all kinds of interactions with us and at the moment these are not deliberately designed.
   c. **Subconscious experience** – we've all seen pens attached to chains in banks and whilst this might not register consciously, sub-consciously we're registering that the banks believe that we're going to steal the pens. This will not be the message that the banks want to give but it is an implication of their action.

8. A CX approach supports our desire to be **ambitious** for our communities and residents, it will provide a robust framework for us to be **courageous** and make courageous decisions and it will **empower** and support our people providing a solid platform for them to do their jobs well.

9. This strategy is built on three key pillars that are crucial to our success: operational delivery, culture & engaged people, and strategy & leadership. Our first pillar focuses on operational delivery, emphasizing the importance of efficiency, reliability, and consistency in our day-to-day operations using innovative thinking and insight to deliver this. The

second pillar relates to our organisational culture and the engagement of our people. A positive and customer-centric culture is essential for creating an environment where our employees are motivated, empowered, and committed to delivering exceptional service. The third pillar focuses on the overarching strategy and leadership within our organisation. Our leaders will play a crucial role in setting the vision, aligning teams, and driving the necessary changes to support our customer experience strategy.

10. By integrating these three pillars into our customer experience strategy, we are laying the foundation for a customer-centric approach that goes beyond transactional interactions (Figure 1).
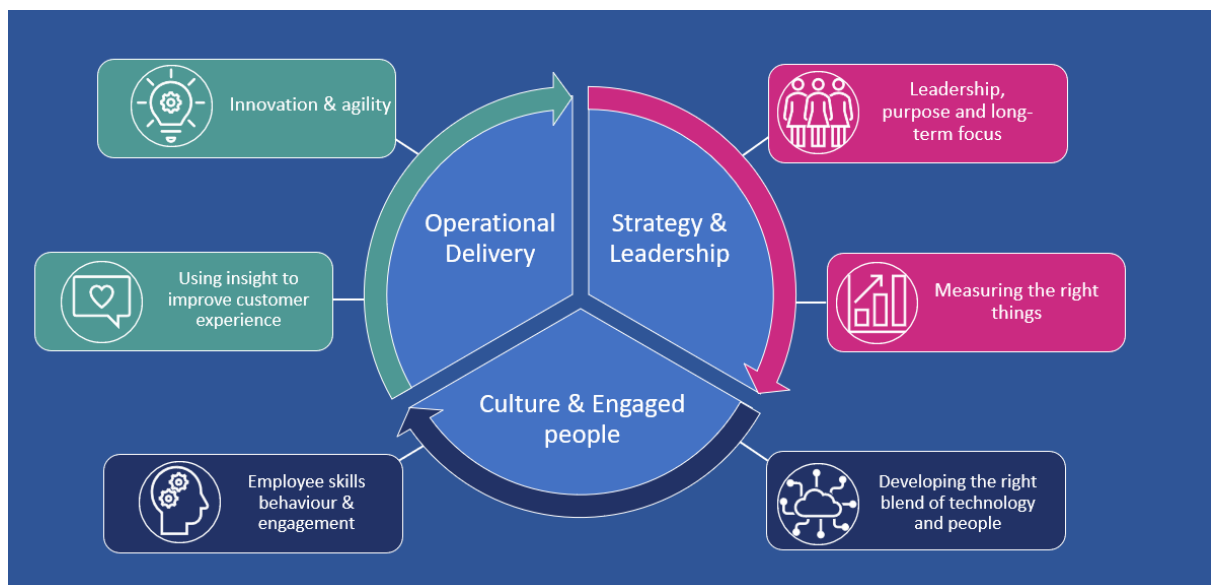
Figure 1

Aims & Objectives

11. The first objective for this programme will be to define what we mean by the **Staffordshire Customer Experience** – what feelings and emotions do our residents want to experience when interacting with us and how will we evoke these in our services? We will create a consistent shared and empathetic understanding of who our residents are, their needs, wants, perceptions and preferences through the collection and analysis of the voice of the customer and business to generate real, actionable insight.

12. It's crucial to recognise that the term "customer" can indeed mean different things to different people, but our goal is to establish a shared understanding and commonality in the experience we aim to provide. It could encompass residents seeking public services, businesses utilising our resources, or visitors exploring our community. Each group brings

unique expectations, needs, and priorities, and understanding these diverse perspectives is essential (Figure 2).

Figure 2

13. We will take this definition and create a **Customer Experience (CX) Strategy** that clearly articulates the experience that our residents want when they interact with us. This strategy will guide decisions and prioritisation for this programme as well as redesign our customer facing pathways and engagement mechanisms.

14. The **Customer Experience (CX) Maturity Model** provides a visual mechanism for illustrating the extent to which a service area has planned, defined, developed, measured and delivered its customer experience journey – to deliver the Customer Experience (CX) Strategy and Target Operating Model (the way we work) (Figure 3).
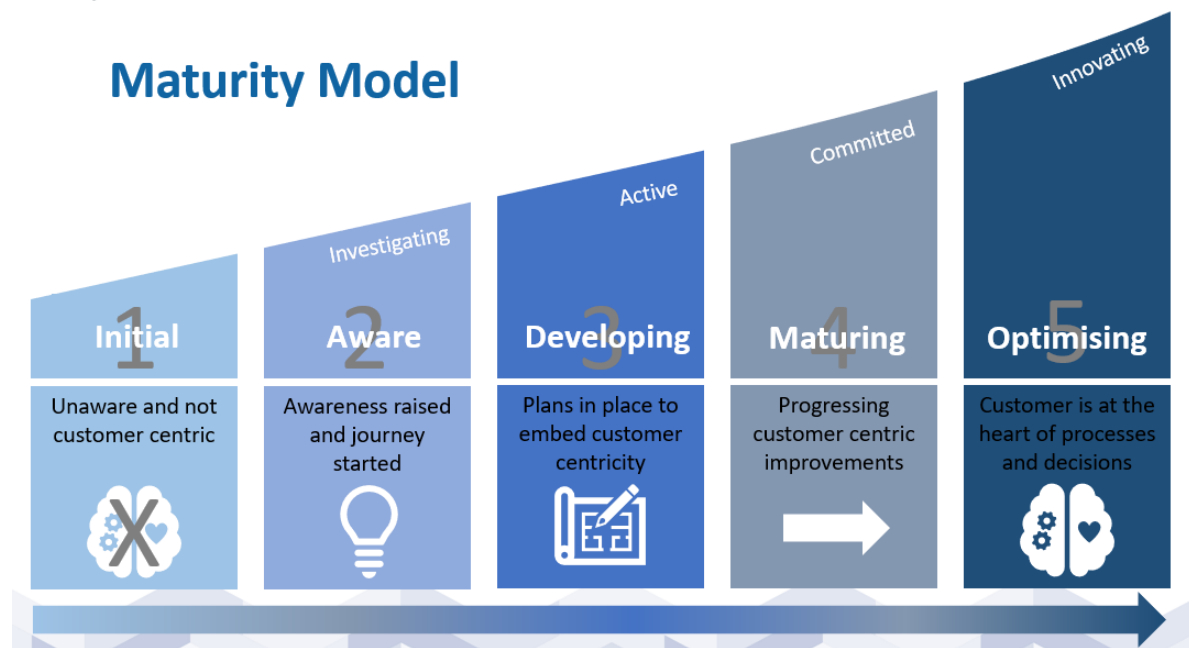
Maturity Model

Figure 3

15. Services will be provided with feedback from their customers and employees to undertake a self-assessment, against the maturity model, highlighting what they are doing well and where they need to improve. They will be able to consult the **CX Quality Framework** to aid in the creation of service action plan and KPI identification – putting the customer at the heart of what they do. They will be able to access support and training to improve skills and supporting innovative problem solving. Finally, a reassessment will take place to evidence improvements and performance. There will be corporate oversight, but services will 'own' their improvement plan.

Roadmap

16. Medium-term and long-term transitional states will be more focused activity to deliver the following three key elements as covered in Figure 1:

   a. Operational delivery.
   b. Strategy and leadership.
   c. Culture and engaged people.

   Incorporating:
   d. Data, insight, and business intelligence.
   e. Cultural and behavioural change.
   f. Digital innovation.
   g. Voice of the Customer/Business.

17. This work will align and complement the other corporate work being undertaken in other commissions.

18. The figure below demonstrates the activities noted above and provides a visual representation of the Roadmap (Figure 4). This is a long-term plan and will not be delivered overnight due to the scale.
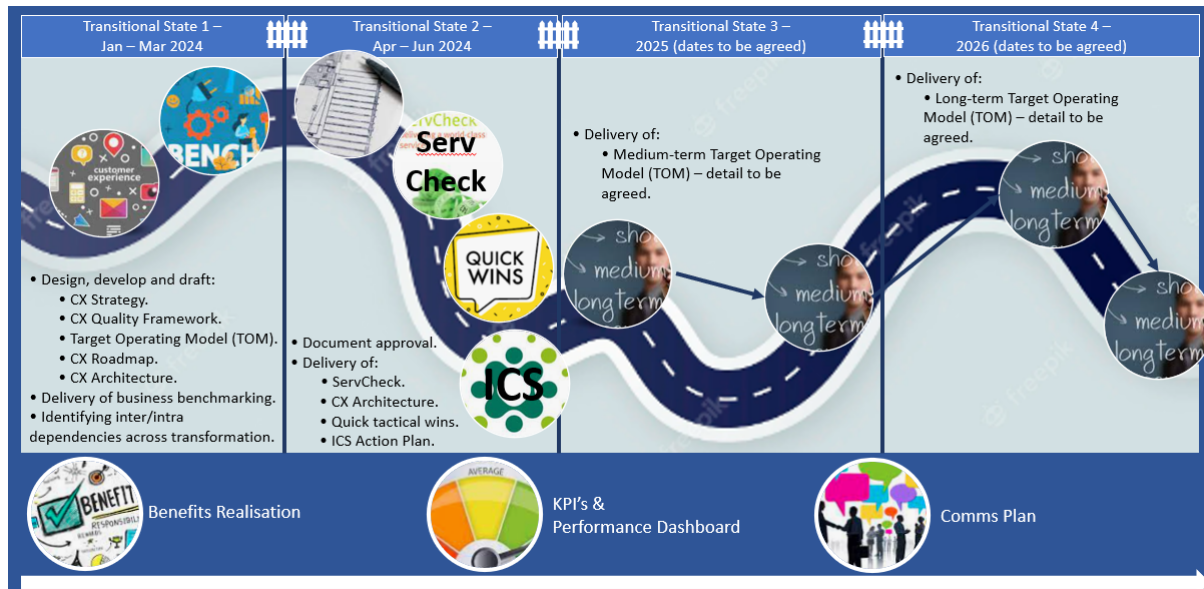

Figure 4

ServiceMark

19. ServiceMark is a national standard, independently recognising an organisation's commitment to customer service and to upholding high standards as part of a long-term embedded strategy, delivered by the Institute for Customer Services (ICS). The ServiceMark accreditation is awarded based on both customer satisfaction and employee engagement, helping SCC to understand the effectiveness of its customer service strategy from multiple touchpoints and identify areas for improvement.

20. Some of the benefits to achieving the ServiceMark include:

    a. national benchmarking
    b. demonstrates a commitment to customer service
    c. business performance improvement
    d. independent recognition
    e. improved employee engagement
    f. meaningful customer insights
    g. actionable feedback

21. The ServiceMark journey will underpin the CX Strategy and provide assurance of performance.

22. We will distribute the customer survey each March, followed by the organisational survey each April. The results from 2024 will be assessed and a comprehensive action plan established. These results will act as assurance that we are doing what matters and making a difference to the customer experience. It will also provide a framework for those services that need help and those that can act as role models in this organisation.

23. We have an aspiration to achieve the ServiceMark accreditation in 2025 – demonstrating Staffordshire's commitment to excellence customer service.

Deliverables

24. Even though we know that there is real positive work being delivered in Staffordshire, to gather and measure the customer experience via the GovMetrics tool, we do not currently have a corporate view of the CX.

25. The following have been identified as foundational CX benefits following the successful delivery of the above programme deliverables. It should be noted though that some of these benefits will not be delivered immediately due to the cultural and behavioural shift that is expected as part of this programme of work

Benefit	Baseline	Actual	Measurement Method
What is the expected benefit to be achieved by achieving our deliverables?	What is the historic baseline for the benefit?	What have we achieved following delivery?	What mechanism/system have we used to collect this?
Increased Customer Satisfaction (CSAT).	Not currently in place	tbc	GovMetrics CSAT Surveys Business Benchmarking results (ICS)
First contact resolution rates (FCR) – *right first time, at first point of contact.*	Not currently in place	tbc	Business Benchmarking results (ICS)
Better customer engagement – *taking*	Offered calls: 2018: **359,574** 2019: **311,158**	tbc	Reduction in offered calls and increase is unique visitors online

an omnichannel approach.	2020: **201,024** 2021: **207,605** 2022: **199,120**		
Increased net prompter score (NPS).	Not currently in place	tbc	Business Benchmarking results (ICS)
Improved customer effort score (CES) – *low-effort customer experiences.*	Not currently in place	tbc	Business Benchmarking results (ICS)
Increased levels of organisational commitment to Customer Service	Not currently in place		ServCheck Results (ICS)
Achieve ServiceMark status, a national standard	Not currently in place		ServiceMark (ICS)

Link to Strategic Plan

26. Excellent customer experience supports all of Staffordshire's desired outcome in the strategic plan.

Link to Other Overview and Scrutiny Activity

27. None

Community Impact

28. Community Impact Assessment

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Customer Experience in Staffordshire slide pack

Community Impact Assessment

Contact Details

Assistant Director: Tracy Thorley, Assistant Director for Corporate Operations
Report Author: Emily Doorbar
Job Title: Head of Customer Excellence
Telephone No.: 01785 276009
E-Mail Address: emily.doorbar@staffordshire.gov.uk

Staffordshire
County Council

Customer Experience

In Staffordshire

Tracy Thorley & Emily Doorbar

April 2024 – Overview & Scrutiny Committee

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Customer: The journey so far...

The work to understand the customer experience started in November 2022 – with the commission of a customer survey tool. We recognised that improving the customer experience was a key indicator for many teams but they lacked the ability to measure and monitor such an important metric.

In October 2023 we were asked to commission an assessment of the council's **approach**, **culture**, and **responsiveness** to the customer and as required, develop a programme of improvement activity.
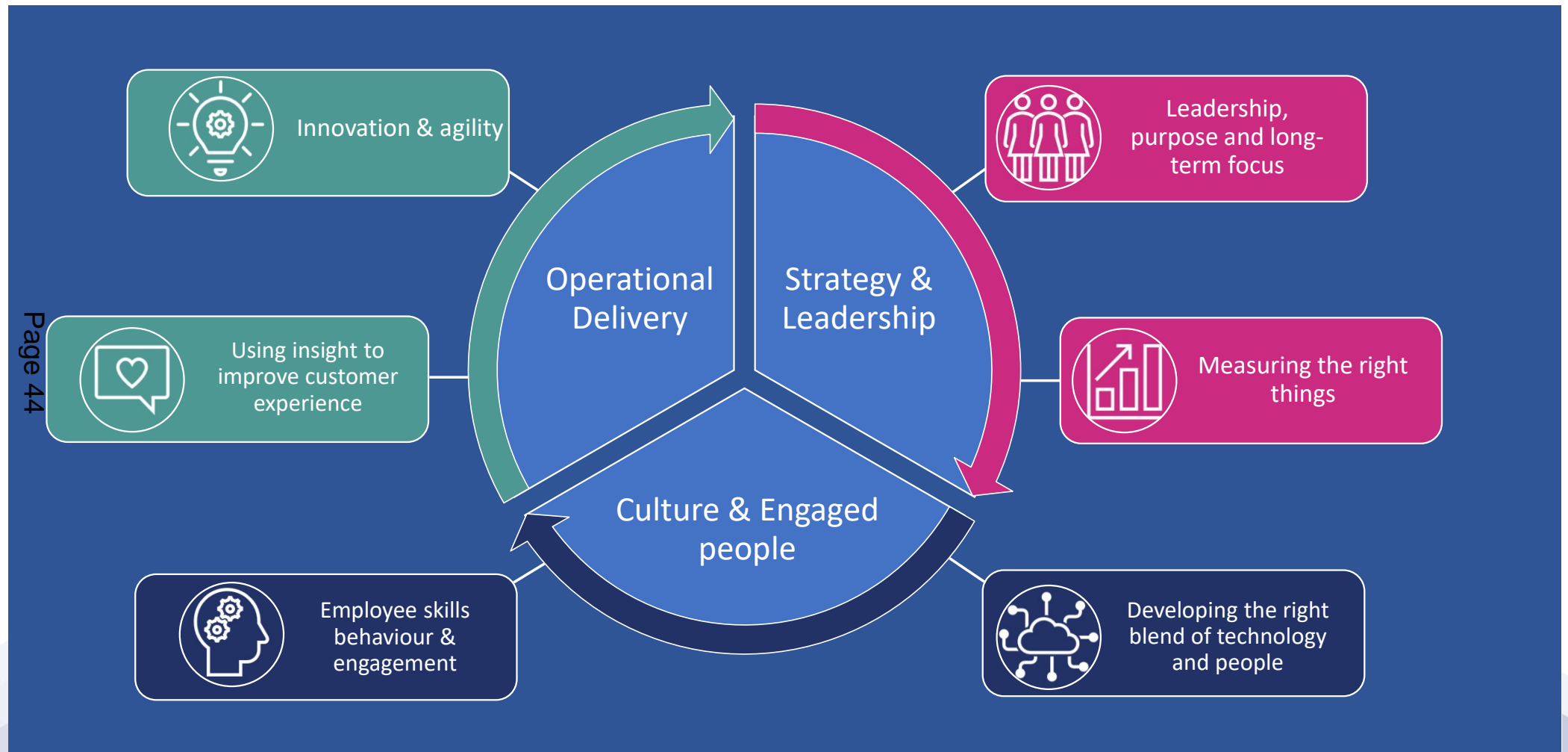
This is difficult because:

- The way we operate is complex

- Variety of customers we serve, whose interests might not align

- The 'Customer Voice' is not consistently collected

- Our culture

- Resource constraints

Staffordshire
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Customer Experience (CX) Strategy approach

- Explore how we can **differentiate ourselves** and our **customer service proposition** to:
  - Win customer trust and earn customer advocates.
  - Reduce demand and complaints.
  - Increase customer satisfaction.

- Engage with and listen to our customers to design and implement **customer centric pathways** and **processes** by assessing **customer effort**, **sentiment** and **satisfaction** at important stages of their customer journey.

- Identify current **customer focused** delivery to spot:
  - Potential quick wins e.g. highways.
  - Complex longer-term activity e.g. vulnerable adults.

- Use **existing data and insight** to pinpoint and prioritise:
  - Customer experience touchpoints (**opportunities to wow**).
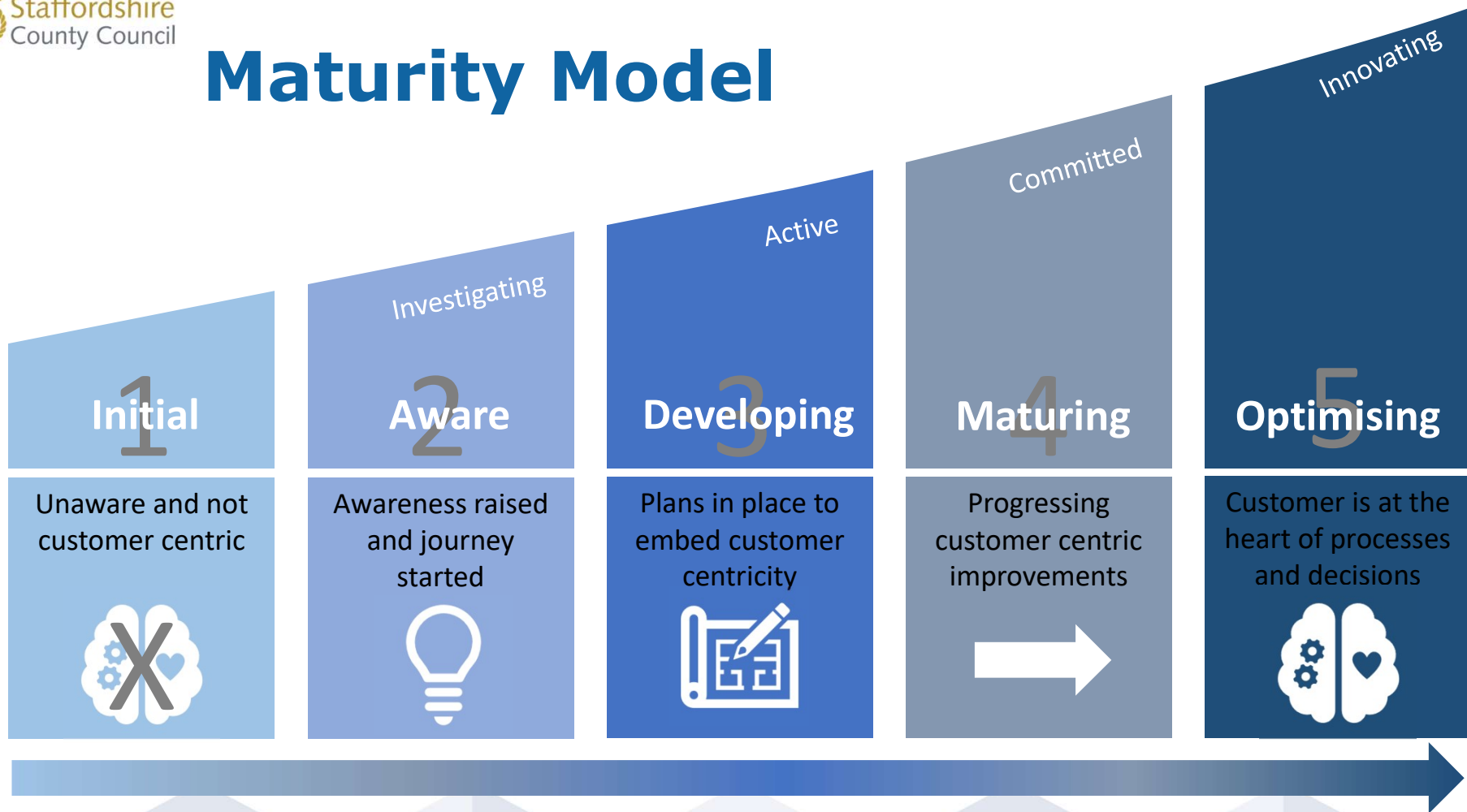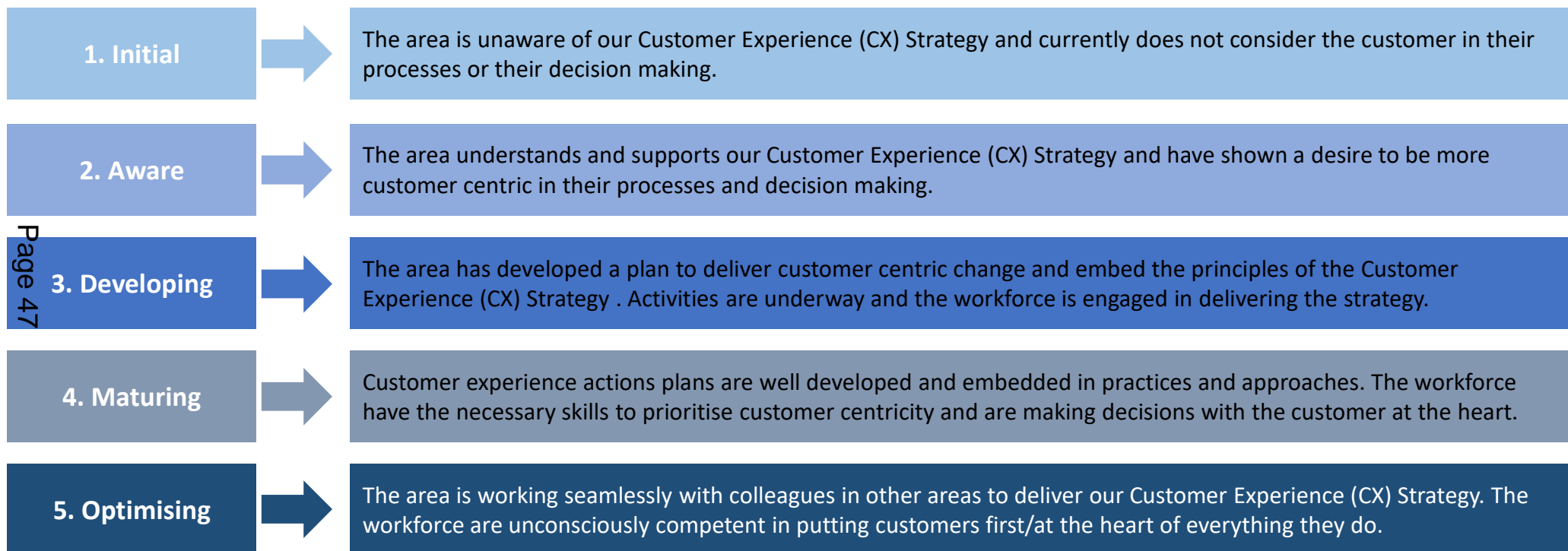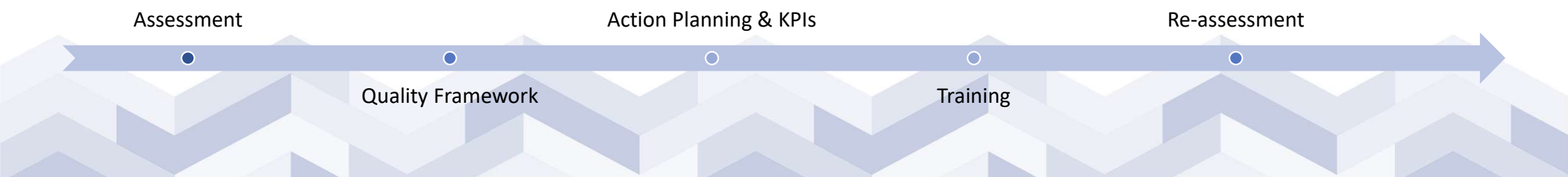 - Improvement opportunities (**pain points**).

CX Strategy

Staffordshire County Council

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Innovation & agility

Using insight to improve customer experience

Operational Delivery

Strategy & Leadership

Culture & Engaged people

Leadership, purpose and long-term focus

Measuring the right things

Employee skills behaviour & engagement

Developing the right blend of technology and people

Maturity Model

1 Initial
Investigating

2 Aware

3 Developing
Active

4 Maturing
Committed

5 Optimising
Innovating

Unaware and not customer centric

Awareness raised and journey started

Plans in place to embed customer centricity

Progressing customer centric improvements

Customer is at the heart of processes and decisions

Staffordshire County Council

CX Maturity Model cont.

Staffordshire County Council

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1. Initial	The area is unaware of our Customer Experience (CX) Strategy and currently does not consider the customer in their processes or their decision making.
2. Aware	The area understands and supports our Customer Experience (CX) Strategy and have shown a desire to be more customer centric in their processes and decision making.
3. Developing	The area has developed a plan to deliver customer centric change and embed the principles of the Customer Experience (CX) Strategy . Activities are underway and the workforce is engaged in delivering the strategy.
4. Maturing	Customer experience actions plans are well developed and embedded in practices and approaches. The workforce have the necessary skills to prioritise customer centricity and are making decisions with the customer at the heart.
5. Optimising	The area is working seamlessly with colleagues in other areas to deliver our Customer Experience (CX) Strategy. The workforce are unconsciously competent in putting customers first/at the heart of everything they do.

Assessment   Action Planning & KPIs   Re-assessment

Quality Framework   Training

CX Maturity Model cont.

There will be a strong focus on:

1. Specifying what values are desired by customers and how these are to be delivered

2. Removing processes/activities that do not contribute to the **'value stream**'.

3. Standardising processes where possible to free up time for further improvement.

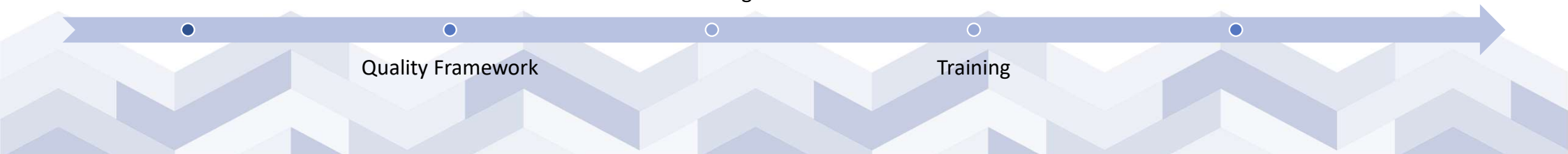4. Introducing processes that drive work to meet customer needs
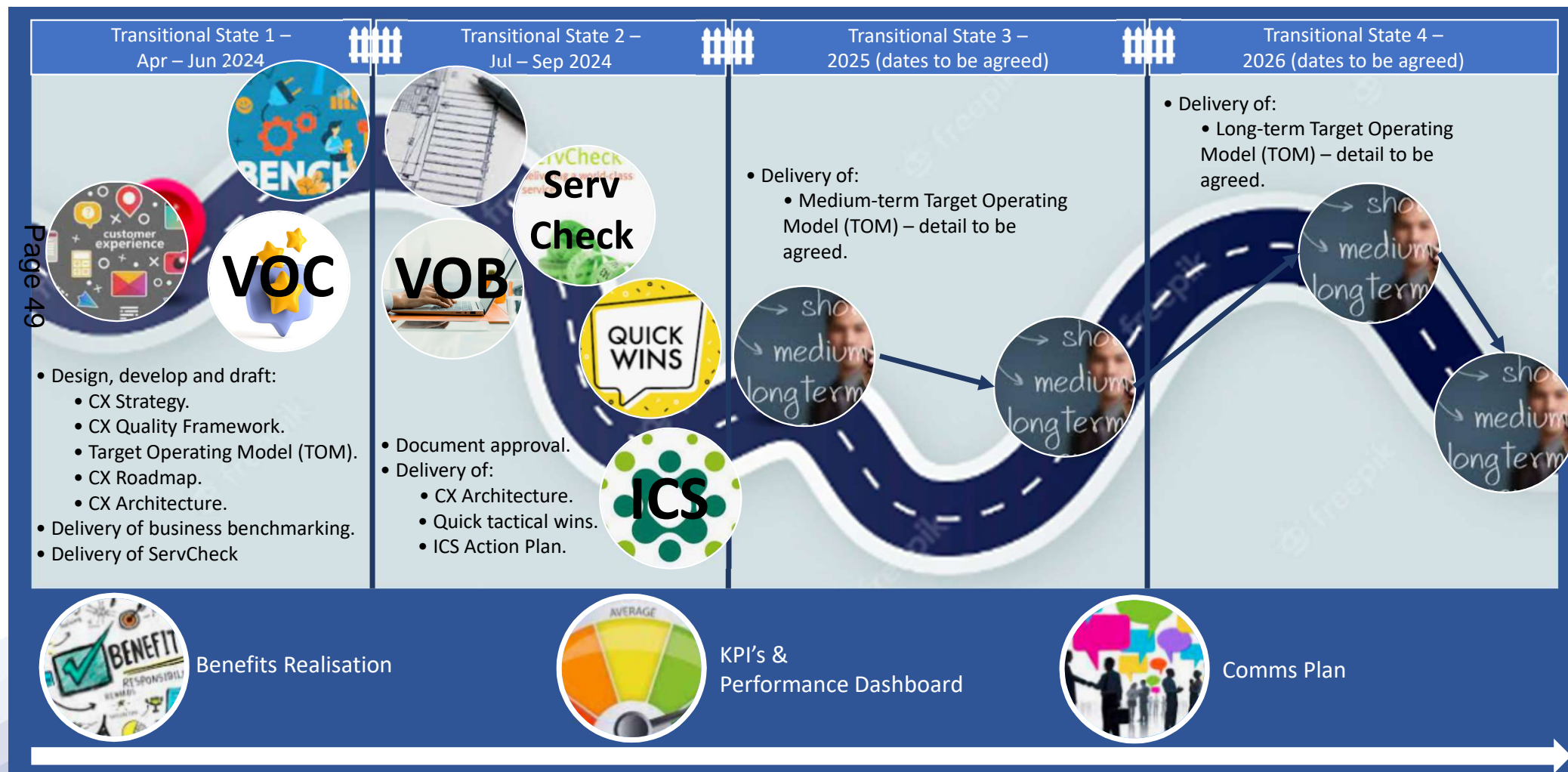
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Assessment		Action Planning & KPIs		Re-assessment
	Quality Framework		Training	

Roadmap

Staffordshire County Council

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Transitional State 1 – Apr – Jun 2024

VOC

- Design, develop and draft:
  - CX Strategy.
  - CX Quality Framework.
  - Target Operating Model (TOM).
  - CX Roadmap.
  - CX Architecture.
- Delivery of business benchmarking.
- Delivery of ServCheck

Transitional State 2 – Jul – Sep 2024

Serv Check

VOB

QUICK WINS

ICS

- Document approval.
- Delivery of:
  - CX Architecture.
  - Quick tactical wins.
  - ICS Action Plan.

Transitional State 3 – 2025 (dates to be agreed)

- Delivery of:
  - Medium-term Target Operating Model (TOM) – detail to be agreed.

Transitional State 4 – 2026 (dates to be agreed)

- Delivery of:
  - Long-term Target Operating Model (TOM) – detail to be agreed.

Benefits Realisation

KPI's & Performance Dashboard

Comms Plan

Institute of Customer Service (ICS)

Customer Scorecard

The following have been identified as foundational CX benefits following the successful delivery of the above programme.

Benefit	Measure	Method
Increased Customer Satisfaction (CSAT)	%	• GovMetrics CSAT Survey • Business Benchmarking results (ICS)
First contact resolution rates (FCR) – *right first time, at first point of contact.*	%	• Business Benchmarking results (ICS)
Better customer engagement – *taking an omnichannel approach.*	Number	• Offered Calls • Unique website hits
Increased net prompter score (NPS).	NPS	• Business Benchmarking results (ICS)
Improved customer effort score (CES) – *low-effort customer experiences.*	Number	• Business Benchmarking results (ICS)
Increased levels of organisational commitment to Customer Service	Score	• ServCheck Results (ICS)
Achieve ServiceMark status*, a national standard*	Accreditation	• ServiceMark (ICS)

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Questions/Reflections

Staffordshire
County Council

Thank-you

tracy.thorley@staffordshire.gov.uk & emily.doorbar@staffordshire.gov.uk

01785 276009

With pride. With purpose. With you.
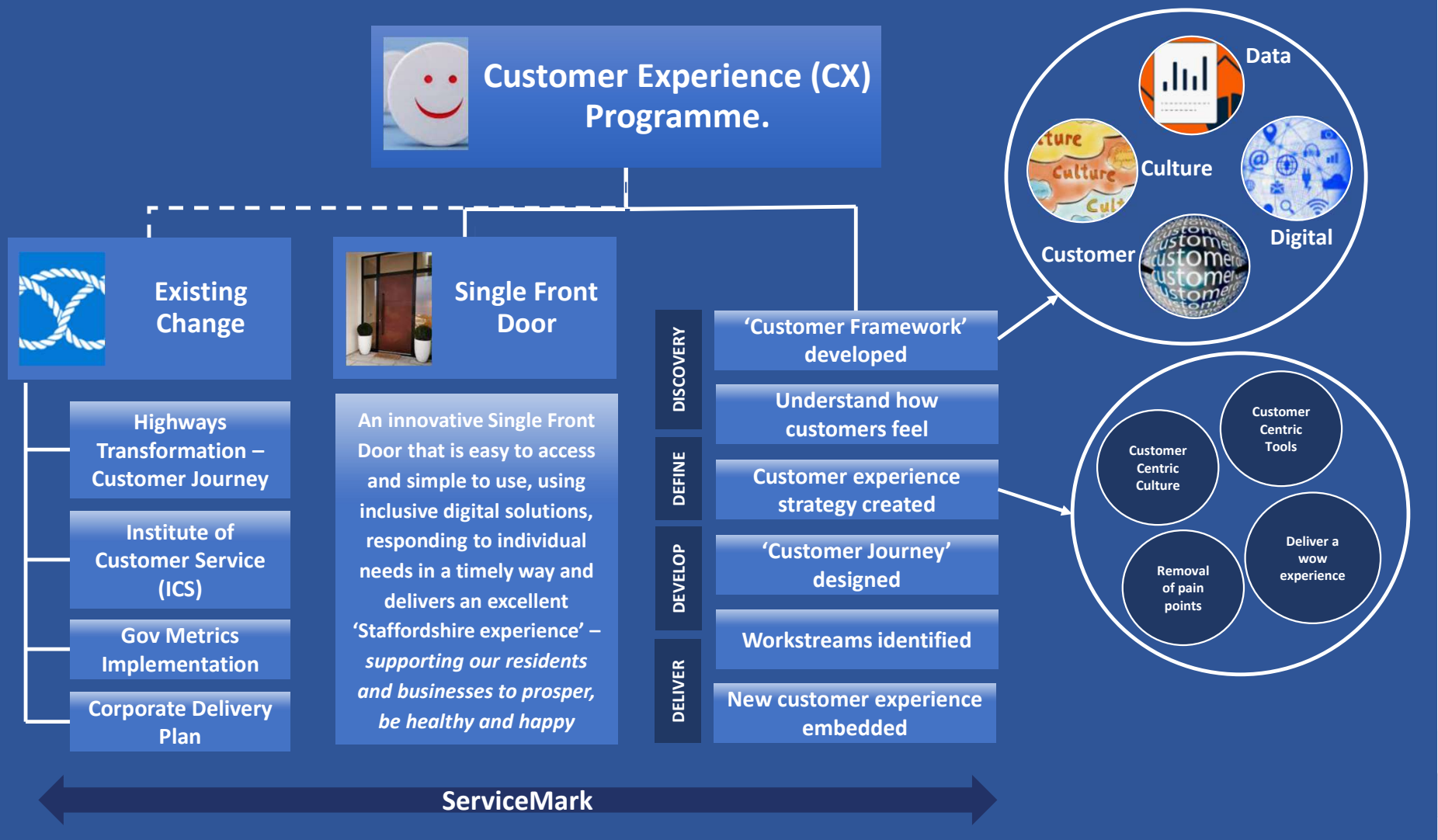
Appendix: Programme Governance

Staffordshire County Council

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Quarterly & Ad Hoc

Monthly

Fortnightly

- CEO Group
- Leaders Board

- SLT
- Cabinet/Informal
- Ad Hoc Boards/ Groups

Individual Districts & Boroughs Governing Boards

County Wide

County Wide

- Key Decision Makers
- Strategic Guidance

Programme Board

- SRO (Sponsor)
- Programme Leads
- Programme Manager
- Key Stakeholders

External Boards

- Customer focused delivery external to this programme

Delivery Groups

- Subject Matter Experts
- Expert Advice & Delivery

Working Groups

- Delivery Leads
- Subject Matter Experts
- Delivery Team Members

Programme Progress Reporting

Community Impact Assessment

Customer Experience (CX) Strategy: 2024 - 2026

Author: Emily Doorbar

Date: March 2024

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Protected Characteristics	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
Cross Cutting themes - impacts that affect all or multiple protected characteristics and health and care need	The **Customer Experience Strategy** is designed to support our residents in a positive way, which will benefit people with protected characteristics. This includes work with our colleagues and partners to put our residents first, improving their journeys through the services that we offer and serving their needs. It will clearly articulate the experience that our residents have told us they want when they interact with us and will guide decisions and prioritisation for this programme as well. It will also aid in redesigning our customer facing pathways, systems and processes and engagement mechanisms. The success of the strategy, and its benefits to residents, will be measured through comprehensive KPIs and surveys at regular intervals, ensuring focus is consistent and benefits are realised.	Residents are not engaged with in a meaningful way; therefore the 'voice of the customer' is limited and not representative. The strategy will cover a significant period of time and there is a risk that the needs/wants of our resident's change.	We will make best use of our professional partnerships with the Institute for Customer Service (ICS) and deliver the Business Benchmarking survey each year. We will survey between 2,000 – 4,000 residents in this way. We will employ a strategy and Target Operating Model for embedding a Customer Experience survey across services in the organisation to collect diverse views and feedback. The strategy includes high-level activities/actions, and once it is approved, we will co-produce a detailed transitional implementation plan with service areas directly.
Age - older and younger people	See first row for **cross cutting themes** already identified.	In addition to the risks identified above, older/less digitally	Information in different formats if required.

Protected Characteristics	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
		enabled customers may feel excluded.	Ensure that the Customer Strategy is aligned with ongoing work to review SCC's approach to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion. Work with the Digital Leadership Group to coordinate activity on digital inclusion and signposting to information, advice, and guidance.
Disability - people who are living with different conditions and disabilities, such as: mental illnesses, long term conditions, Autism and other neurodiverse conditions, learning disabilities, sensory impairment and physical disabilities.	See first row for **cross cutting themes** already identified.	In addition to the risks identified above, residents with learning/communication disability, as well as those who are neuro diverse, may find it hard to engage and provide their feedback.	Information in different formats if required. Ensure that the Customer Strategy is aligned with ongoing work to review SCC's approach to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion. Customer Service representatives will continue to be enrolled in BSL classes and attend deaf community groups to

Protected Characteristics	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
			share feedback and to ask for input.
Gender reassignment - those people in the process of transitioning from one sex to another	See first row for **cross cutting themes** already identified.	See first row for **cross cutting themes** already identified.	Ensure that the Customer Strategy is aligned with ongoing work to review SCC's approach to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion.
Marriage & Civil Partnership - people who are married or in a civil partnership should not be treated differently at work	See first row for **cross cutting themes** already identified.	See first row for **cross cutting themes** already identified.	See first row for already identified **mitigations/recommendations**
Pregnancy & Maternity - women who are pregnant or who have recently had a baby, including breast feeding mothers	See first row for **cross cutting themes** already identified.	See first row for **cross cutting themes** already identified.	See first row for already identified **mitigations/recommendations**
Race - people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins	See first row for **cross cutting themes** already identified.	The most recent census shows that Staffordshire has a significant increase in Polish and Romanian residents. As these are newer communities, there is a risk that their needs are not fully considered. (e.g. language barriers)	Information in different languages if required. Ensure that the Customer Strategy is aligned with ongoing work to review SCC's approach to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion.

Protected Characteristics	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
		Refugees who may have settled in Staffordshire (e.g. Afghanistan and Ukraine)	
Religion or Belief - people with any religious or philosophical belief, including a lack of belief. A belief should affect a person's life choices or the way they live for it to be considered	See first row for **cross cutting themes** already identified.	See first row for **cross cutting themes** already identified.	See first row for already identified **mitigations/recommendations**
Sex - men or women	See first row for **cross cutting themes** already identified.	See first row for **cross cutting themes** already identified.	See first row for already identified **mitigations/recommendations**
Sexual orientation - whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes	See first row for **cross cutting themes** already identified.	See first row for **cross cutting themes** already identified.	See first row for already identified **mitigations/recommendations**

➢ **Workforce Assessment**

Who will be affected – consider the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage & civil partnership, pregnancy & maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
SCC employees across Staffordshire	See **cross cutting themes** section. A Customer Experience (CX) approach supports our desire to be ambitious for our communities and residents, it will provide a robust framework for us to be courageous and make courageous decisions and it will empower and support our people providing a solid platform for them to do their jobs well. The strategy will support staff to better understand the needs of their customers and better equip them to deliver an excellence customer experience. A Customer Experience (CX) Quality Framework will evaluate what our	Staff do not have the skills needed to embody the strategy. Staff find it difficult to allocate the time necessary to engage in training. Staff are not engaged with in a meaningful way; therefore the 'voice of the business' is limited and not representative. Outcome may indicate that staff need to work in new or innovative ways to better serve residents. This might cause some anxiety. Employees may not know the difference between Customer Satisfaction/Service and	We will make best use of our professional partnerships with the Institute for Customer Service (ICS) and design and deliver a comprehensive schedule for **Customer Experience (CX) Training** that will embed outstanding customer service standards in our staff. Training will be promoted with SLT/WLT/OMT to increase support. We will make best use of our professional partnerships with the Institute for Customer Service (ICS) and deliver the ServCheck survey each year to employees. Providing

Who will be affected – consider the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage & civil partnership, pregnancy & maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
	residents want in a consistent manner and how we can effectively measure customer-related performance. We will use effective benchmarking to design a comprehensive set of customer metrics for responsiveness, satisfaction, and other key performance indicators The Customer Strategy and Target Operating Model will be designed to deliver the foundations for deep cultural change within Staffordshire County Council. It will create a robust framework for the design and development of skills, tools and techniques which will enable all staff to be unconsciously competent around customer centricity and put	Customer Experience making action planning difficult.	better understand of Customer Service culture across the organisation. Results will be used to help create comprehensive action plans. Embedding a Customer Experience (CX) Comms and Engagement Plan as well as the use of internal communication vehicles like StaffSpace and potentially the Staffordshire Innovation Challenge.

Who will be affected – consider the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage & civil partnership, pregnancy & maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation	Benefits	Risks	Mitigations / Recommendations
	our residents at the heart of everything that we do and every decision that they make.		

Staffordshire County Council

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Tuesday 09 April 2024

Cabinet's response to MTFS Working Group report

Local Member Interest:

N/A

Background

On 18 December 2023 Corporate O&S Committee agreed the [MTFS Working Group Report](#). The recommendations were referred to Cabinet on 24 January 2024 when considering the [Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024-2029.pdf (staffordshire.gov.uk)](#) .

Current Position

1. The Executive response to the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the recommendation(s) of the MTFS Working Group report are appended to the report (Appendix 1).
2. Cabinet considered the report and recommendations of the MTFS Working Group at the Cabinet meeting 24 January 2024 when the Medium Term Financial Strategy 2024-2029 was agreed and referred to Council on 8 February 2024.

Key Considerations

3. Cabinet have considered the risks and financial uncertainties and have set a Contingency budget at £15m for 2024/25 which is a reasonable sum to set aside to meet unknown pressures, should they emerge.
4. In considering the level of reserves and their use to support the MTFS, the risks have been taken into account and the use of reserves is sustainable in the medium term.
5. In the longer term, Cabinet are recommending that services begin to identify savings and transformation in order to ensure the budget can be balanced in future.
6. Cabinet are closely monitoring the Children's Transformation programme, dashboard monitoring performance is shared with the Children's Improvement Board and Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny where an overview of performance is provided and corrective actions being taken. The additional items requested by the Working Group will be considered for inclusion within the reports.

7. Cabinet are monitoring the financial forecast and progress against reviewing the SEND Transport service closely. Actions to increase efficiency of route planning, increasing vehicle occupancy have been supported and impact is being monitored.
8. Lobbying the government over guidance surrounding EHCPs will be considered and may be incorporated into future lobbying undertaken by Cabinet

Conclusion

9. Cabinet has taken into account the recommendations and has provided its response. Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee will continue to receive quarterly Integrated Performance Reports to maintain overview of the MTFS 2024-2029.

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

Appendix 1 – MTFS Working Group recommendations and Executive Response

Contact Details

Assistant Director: Rob Salmon

Report Author: Rachel Spain
Job Title: Chief Accountant
Telephone No.:   Telephone No. 01785
E-Mail Address: Rachel.Spain@staffordshire.gov.uk

Executive response to recommendations of the Corporate O&S Committee MTFS Working Group report

	Comments and Recommendations of the Corporate O&S Committee	Cabinet Member Accept/ accept in part /Do not accept	Cabinet's Response - Comments Further detail: Current position, plans and timeline Resource implication
R1	**Plan B** - that Cabinet considers preparing a contingency plan to refer to if Plan A goes off track. Not a replacement but a plan that offers an alternative to compliment the risk-based approach on what we know so far 2024-26, assumptions from five-year trend and performance data. With so many uncertainties in the coming years, combined with some significant risks, it would be useful to have the assurance from Cabinet that a Plan B exists.	Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources Accept	Cabinet have considered the risks and financial uncertainties and have set a Contingency budget at £15m for 2024/25 which is a reasonable sum to set aside to meet unknown pressures, should they emerge. In considering the level of reserves and their use to support the MTFS, the risks have been taken into account and the use of reserves is sustainable in the medium term. In the longer term, Cabinet are recommending that services begin to identify savings and transformation in order to ensure the budget can be balanced in future.
R2	**Children's Transformation** - that the Children's Transformation programme continues at pace and delivers a reduction in numbers of children in our care, in line with the assumptions in the MTFS. It is recommended that Cabinet and Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive quarterly	Cabinet Members for Children and Young People and Finance and Resources	Cabinet is closely monitoring the Children's Transformation programme, dashboard monitoring performance is shared with the Children's Improvement Board and Safeguarding Overview and Scrutiny where an overview of performance is provided and corrective actions being taken. The additional items requested will be considered for inclusion within the reports.

	monitoring as part of the integrated performance updates, as follows: a. High-level dashboard monitoring of the transformation programmes performance. b. Exception reporting and corrective actions planned. c. A breakdown of the target savings against delivery dates			
R3	**SEND Transport** – that Cabinet be requested to inject more pace to move forward on SEND transport work and encourage exploring new ways to engage with parents to find provision for their child nearer to home.	Cabinet Member for Education (and SEND)	Cabinet are monitoring the financial forecast and progress against reviewing the SEND Transport service closely. Actions to increase efficiency of route planning, increasing vehicle occupancy have been supported and impact is being monitored.	
R4	**EHCP Guidance** – that Cabinet be requested to challenge the lack of clarity in the guidance when determining EHCP's and make representation to the Secretary of State for Education to review policy and guidance in the interests of clarity and consistency in EHCP process.	Leader and Cabinet Member for Education (and SEND)	Lobbying the government over the guidance surrounding EHCPs will be considered and may be incorporated into future lobbying undertaken by Cabinet.	

	Comments and Recommendations of the Corporate O&S Committee	Cabinet Member Accept/ accept in part /Do not accept	Cabinet's Response - Comments Further detail: Current position, plans and timeline Resource implication
	The Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee have issued a number of recommendations in their report to Cabinet on Carbon Sequestration and Woodland Creation. This report was presented to Cabinet on 17th January 2024.		Whilst formal responses to the recommendations on carbon sequestration and woodland creation will be provided, the MTFS does include provision for investments in Countryside and the environment around Chasewater and Cannock Chase in particular plus investment in tree planting.

Staffordshire County Council

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee - Tuesday 09 April 2024

Climate Change Working Group report on Carbon Sequestration and Woodland creation - Cabinets response

Recommendations

I recommend that the Committee:

a. Considers the Cabinet response to the recommendations of the Carbon Sequestration and Woodland Creation report as per the decision made during the cabinet meeting on 17th January 2024.

b. Approves of the response or confers observations appropriately.

Local Member Interest:

N/A

Report of Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Change

Summary

What is the Overview and Scrutiny Committee being asked to do and why?

1. Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee are asked to consider the Cabinet response to the recommendations of the Carbon Sequestration and Woodland Creation report as per the decision made during the cabinet meeting on 17th January 2024.

2. The executive response to be approved or any observation to be conferred back to Cabinet.

3. We would ask the committee to consider the importance of taking a holistic approach on Carbon Sequestration and bear in mind that some scenarios may need further consideration into the impacts that options may have on the wider delivery of our statutory services.

Report

Background

4. On 17th January 2024 Cabinet received the <u>Climate Change Working Group report – Carbon Sequestration and Woodland Creation</u>. Following discussion, a decision was made that an executive response to the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the recommendation(s) of the Carbon Sequestration and Woodland Creation report be provided within two months of receipt of the report.

Current Position

5. The Cabinet welcomes the report from the Scrutiny Working Group. It agrees that Woodland Development has the potential to deliver significant benefits to the County and its residents including in relation to Carbon Sequestration, and that is why the creation of new woodlands is very much part of the Cabinet's future plans. To deliver this the Cabinet will be considering how best this can be achieved and considering where opportunities can best be utilised for this purpose balancing the benefits of different land uses and the suitability of individual land holdings for those various land uses. The Cabinet also recognises that Carbon reduction is always a better option than Carbon sequestration and will continue to challenge itself on its projected residual carbon emissions in 2050 to ensure that its projected residual emissions are reduced to the smallest amount possible.

Key Considerations

6. Whilst cabinet accepts 4 of the 6 recommendations provided by the report, consideration has to be given to:

   a. R1 - That the Cabinet be requested to consider the amount of carbon sequestration that can be achieved on SCC land to mitigate residual carbon emissions from SCC's carbon footprint that will be present in 2050.

   i. **Cabinet Response** Accept in Part –
   The "LUC – Zero by Nature study" – confirms the amount of carbon sequestration achievable on the SCC property portfolio, excluding Highways assets is enough to mitigate the "residual" carbon emissions from SCC carbon footprint. This report also details the amount of carbon already stored within the rural portfolio, which need to be kept stable. Within the Climate change action plan an estimation on the residual emissions in 2050 from SCC activities has been made, which

is reviewed annually. Wider discussions are ongoing internally to ensure all aspects have been considered.

b. R3 - That Cabinet be requested to consider cessation of disposal of Council owned land /County farms already on the asset disposal list until it has been considered for inclusion in the concept model.

i. **Cabinet Response** – Do Not Accept

The capital receipts from the sale of property assets make an important contribution to funding the Council's Capital Programme to fund school improvements, improve roads etc. Consideration therefore needs to be given to whether a moratorium on land disposals would impact the Council's future plans before approving a moratorium on asset disposals.

Conclusion

7. With such an important County Council decision, to achieve our Net Zero commitment, it is important to take a holistic approach on Carbon Sequestration. Collaborative working and cross directorate discussion will be needed to ensure all aspects have been considered.

Link to Strategic Plan

8. Whilst the Climate Change Working Group report on Carbon Sequestration directly links to one of SCC's strategic priorities namely to 'Tackle Climate Change, enhance our environment, and make Staffordshire more sustainable,' Cabinet's response also bears SCC's overarching pledge in mind: 'Live within our means and deliver value for money'.

Community Impact

9. N/A

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Cabinet Report - Carbon Sequestration and Woodland Creation

Appendix 2 – Carbon Sequestration and Woodland Creation for Net Zero Recommendations and Executive response.

Contact Details

Assistant Director: David Atkinson, **Assistant Director for Connectivity and Sustainability**

Report Author: James Cartwright
Job Title: **Interim Head of Sustainability**
Telephone No.: 01785 277253
E-Mail Address: James.cartwright@staffordshire.gov.uk

Cabinet Meeting on Wednesday 17 January 2024

Carbon Sequestration and Woodland Creation

Report of the Climate Change Working Group on behalf of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillor Simon Tagg, Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Change

"Although this authority has taken steps towards its target of reaching net zero by 2050 by cutting carbon emissions by 50 per cent since 2019, there is still more to be done.

This working party report suggests possible ways that the Council can meet its commitment to the environment and support Staffordshire's economy, while also enhancing the county's quality of life.

At this stage we are being asked to consider the report and respond in due course."

Report Summary:

The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee established a Climate Change Working Group to investigate carbon capture and offsetting residual carbon in Staffordshire County Council to meet its Climate Change commitment to achieve Net Zero by 2050.

The Working Group gathered evidence from a range of sources during its review and presents a report (Appendix 1) to summarise what it found, what needs to be done and six recommendations to consider how to offset residual carbon through carbon sequestration and woodland creation in Staffordshire.

Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed the report on 6 November 2023 and referred it to Cabinet to receive the report and to request Cabinet to consider the content and prepare an executive response to the six recommendations in the report within two months of its receipt.

Recommendations

I recommend that Cabinet:

a. Receive the report of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Climate Change Working Group on Carbon Sequestration and Woodland Creation.

b. Provide an executive response to the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the recommendation(s) of the Carbon Sequestration and Woodland Creation report (Appendix 1) within two months of receipt of the report.

Staffordshire County Council

Cabinet – Wednesday 17 January 2024

Carbon Sequestration and Woodland Creation

Report of the Climate Change Working Group on behalf of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Recommendations of the Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Change

I recommend that Cabinet:

a. Receive the report of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee's Climate Change Working Group on Carbon Sequestration and Woodland Creation.

b. Provide an executive response to the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the recommendation(s) of the Carbon Sequestration and Woodland Creation report within two months of receipt of the report.

Local Member Interest:

N/A

Report of the Climate Change Working Group on behalf of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Reasons for Recommendations:

1. The Climate Change Working Group focussed on carbon capture and offsetting residual carbon in Staffordshire County Council. The Council is required to remove as much carbon from the atmosphere as it emits. The Council's Climate Change Action Plan shows that the Council is working well to reduce its carbon emissions, but we found that there would still be a need to offset 7,000-10,000 tonnes of residual carbon to balance its carbon emissions by 2050. The working group focussed on what more could be done to achieve this.

2. The Working Group found that carbon capture and storage through technology was not an option at this time and identified that the sustainable way to capture carbon emissions is to plant and grow trees and to store carbon in trees and wood.

3. The Working Group gathered evidence from Council officers, the Forestry Commission, The National Forest Company, Norbury Park Estate and Birmingham Institute of Forest Research (BIFOR).

4. Members visited Norbury Park Estate and the BIFOR free air carbon dioxide enrichment experiment to see woodland management in action and the experiment to investigate tree health and the impact of climate change on trees and woodland.

5. The Working Group identified that carbon sequestration could not be looked at in isolation amidst a dual crisis of climate change and biodiversity. There were many benefits of new woodland for Climate Change and Nature recovery including: Carbon sequestration, reduced emission, air quality improvements, climate resilience, temperature resilience, soil health, recreational health and education, and economic benefits.

6. Members determined to broaden their approach and consider how to join up some of the individual strands of work in Staffordshire to make advantage of the benefits of woodland. Members considered what is working well, the County Council rural portfolio and the wider benefits of woodland creation.

7. Members understood that woodlands can also bring multiple sustainable benefits (social, environmental, and economic) and the Forestry Commission identified funding and support to develop a plan and actively manage woodlands using the UK Forestry Standard.

8. The report (Appendix 1) provides a summary of the evidence gathered by the Working Group relating to carbon sequestration and woodland creation, the conclusions and recommendations are presented to Cabinet for information and further investigation as a positive step forward to meet the council's commitment to achieve Net Zero by 2050.

9. The recommendations in the report are bold and ambitious, to plan a concept forest that will help deliver our commitments for climate change and nature, improve our environment, develop the green economy and enhance green skills plus many more benefits for the residents of Staffordshire. The challenge is to plan for action and commit to a greener future.

Legal Implications

10. Climate Change Act 2008, amendment (May 2019), requiring the country to bring all greenhouse gas emissions to net-zero by 2050. England Trees Action Plan 2021 to 2024, increase tree and woodland cover requirements.

Resource and Value for Money Implications

11. Forestry Commission Funding has been identified for the planning, funding, establishing, growing and management of Woodland and is available until March 2024. The details of further resource impacts / implications have not yet been identified but will be reported in future reports to Cabinet.

Climate Change Implications

12. One of the key priorities in the Staffordshire County Council Strategic Plan is to tackle climate change, enhance our environment, and make Staffordshire more sustainable.

13. In the absence of engineered long term carbon storage, carbon sequestration by natural means seems to be the only option available to the Council in the near future to mitigate its residual carbon emissions.

14. If a "Staffordshire Forest" is not established by 2030 as part of our climate change mitigation, it will be too late to sequester the amount of carbon we need to annually by our 2050 target.

List of Background Documents/Appendices:

Climate change - Staffordshire County Council

Appendix 1 – Climate Change Working Group report – Carbon Sequestration and Woodland Creation

Contact Details

Director: John Tradewell, Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Corporate Services

Report Author: Deb Breedon
Job Title: Scrutiny and Support Manager
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Carbon Sequestration and Woodland Creation for Net Zero
Recommendations and Executive response

	Recommendations of the Corporate O&S Committee	Cabinet Member Accept/ accept in part /Do not accept	Cabinet's Response Further detail: Current position, plans and timeline Resource implication
R1	That the Cabinet be requested to consider the amount of carbon sequestration that can be achieved on SCC land to mitigate residual carbon emissions from SCC's carbon footprint that will be present in 2050	Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Change Accept in part	The "LUC report" – confirms the amount of carbon sequestration achievable on the SCC property portfolio, excluding Highways assets is enough to mitigate the "residual" carbon emissions from SCC carbon footprint. This report also details the amount of carbon already stored within the rural portfolio, which need to be kept stable. Within the Climate change action plan an estimation on the residual emissions in 2050 from SCC activities has been made, which is reviewed annually. Wider discussions are ongoing internally to ensure all aspects have been considered.
R2	That Cabinet consider how to progress planning for tree planting, woodland creation and to shape the concept model to plant a Staffordshire Forest.	Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Change Accept	To be able to mitigate SCC residual carbon emissions by tree planting, the woodland concerned will need to mature, to enable the new ecosystems to sequester these residual emissions. The last date permissible to facilitate this is 2030. Tree planting grants are available which will cover the majority of establishment costs for the any new woodlands. However, permission to plant and access to these grants has a lead in time of approximately 18 months.

			Properly managed a degree of land use change could bring wider benefits into the rural economy through rural business diversification, tourism, green skills provision and much more. To progress creation of new woodlands there are resource implications on staff time and budget allocation needed to start engagement with Partners. The County Council has committed the following investment, which has been approved in the revised MTFS.: • Resources to support our corporate tree management strategy and work programme to enhance our tree resource. • £1M Agreed to expand our tree planting programme.
R3	That Cabinet be requested to consider cessation of disposal of Council owned land /County farms already on the asset disposal list until it has been considered for inclusion in the concept model.	Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Change Do not accept	The capital receipts from the sale of property assets make an important contribution to funding the Council's Capital Programme to fund school improvements, improve roads etc. Consideration therefore needs to be given to whether a moratorium on land disposals would impact the Council's future plans before approving a moratorium on asset disposals.
R4	That the Cabinet take advantage of Forestry Commission Funding identified by the working group which is available until March 2024 and apply for the planning, funding, establishing, growing and management of Woodlands at the earliest opportunity	Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Change Accept	The Woodland Creation Planning Grant (WCPG) is available from the Forestry Commission to assist with the planning of new woodland creation, with no liability to plant, but will give the preapprovals needed to proceed at pace. The WCPG closes on 31/03/2025 after a recent extension in funding. Woodland creation is a major policy target for national government, delivering wider benefits to our communities and not just sequestering carbon. It would be safe to assume that

			in the long-term woodland creation projects will be supported and with Local Authorities being larger landowners, access to capital support should be certain.
R5	That the Cabinet undertake to develop a delivery model to plant a Staffordshire Forest, not only to mitigate our carbon emissions but also to realise the wider benefits of woodland creation and, explore the wider benefits and partnership opportunities with organisations like Forestry Commission and National Forest Company (FC/NFC).	Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Change Accept	Work is underway to explore a delivery model initially focusing on SCC's net zero target and the woodland creation that would be required to achieve this. The work will include exploration of how the wider benefits mentioned in R2 above could be realised.
R6	That the Leader and Cabinet Members be requested to engage with the District and Borough Councils at the Leaders Board and Sustainability Board to consider the concept model for a Staffordshire Forest, to invest in woodlands as a way to tackle the dual crisis of climate change and biodiversity.	Cabinet Member for Environment, Infrastructure and Climate Change Accept	It is suggested that the lead body for this collaboration could be the Tree and Woodland Group being established as part of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). The LNRS is a requirement of the Environment Act 2021 and all district and borough councils, statutory agencies and environmental bodies will be involved in its development. The remit of the LNRS is nature recovery but also the delivery of wider environmental benefits. The LNRS structure will also link in with the Sustainability Board and Leaders Board but provides an ideal focus over the coming months to progress a wider plan for trees and woodlands across Staffordshire and Stoke. The LNRS is due for completion by April 2025.

WORK PROGRAMME
Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 2023/2024

The Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee is the Council's principal overview and scrutiny committee. It is responsible for co-ordinating and approving the scrutiny work programmes, overseeing the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and ensuring coherence of approach to cross cutting policy themes. The committee also has a key role in challenging progress around the Council's ambitions of running the business well.

The Committee also scrutinises those areas of the County Council's activity focused on corporate improvement. Its remit covers:

- Holding the Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources of the Council to account for achievement of the overall vision of a connected Staffordshire.
- The Council's overall performance and approach to managing performance and Strategic Corporate Planning
- The Council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy
- The Council's on-going programme of improvement and transformation.
- The Committee is responsible for scrutiny of achievement against the Council's strategic priorities.
- The Council as a commissioning organisation including how it uses customer insight to drive improvements in services.

We review our work programme regularly to ensure it remains relevant to the challenges facing local communities, the Council and its partners.

Councillor Samantha Thompson
Chairman of the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Committee

If you would like to know more about our Work Programme or how to raise issues for potential inclusion on a Work Programme, then please contact Mandy Pattinson, Scrutiny and Support Officer (mandy.pattinson@staffordshire.gov.uk)

	Work Programme 2023/24		
Date of Meeting	**Item**	**Details (Background)**	**Action / Outcome**
~~5 June 2023~~	~~Reserved for Call In~~		
20 June 2023	**Work Programme Planning -** Members: Alan White/Ian Parry	Development of the work programme for 2023/24	The draft work programme was approved. **Action-** Cabinet members and officers invited to meetings and dates confirmed
	Appointment of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy Working Group Officers: Mandy Pattinson		• Cllr M Wilcox (Chair) • Cllr B Peters • Cllr N Yates • Cllr J Pert • Cllr G Heath • Cllr S Thompson • Cllr J Oates
	O&S Annual report Officer: Deb Breedon		The report was approved and referred to **Council for consideration on 20 July 2023**
	Overview and Scrutiny Work Programmes Overview and Scrutiny Chairman	To ensure communication between the committees and no duplication	The quarterly work programmes was agreed.
	Climate Change Working Group Update and member appointment Officer: Zach Simister	To receive an update report	a) The update was received. b) Cllrs Smith and Wileman would be asked if the wish to remain on the working group. **Action-both confirmed they want to remain.** c) That subject to councillors confirming their wish to remain on the Group, the membership remain as: • Cllr S Thompson (Chair) • Cllr C Wileman • Cllr N Yates • Cllr T Clements • Cllr J Pert • Cllr B Peters • Cllr D Smith

Work Programme 2023/24			
Date of Meeting	**Item**	**Details (Background)**	**Action / Outcome**
	Integrated Performance Report – Quarter 4 Members: Alan White/Ian Parry Officers: John Tradewell/Rob Salmon	Quarterly report.	a) The Integrated Performance and Financial Outturn Report was noted as the position as at the end of year 2022/23. b) A copy of the "Social Care workforce strategy" be circulated to members for information. c) Information clarifying the position with the Household waste sites charging for DIY waste would be forwarded to members when available. **Action-** b and c Emailed to members on 030723
6 July 2023	~~Reserved for Call In~~		
3 August 2023	**Integrated Performance Report – Quarter 1** Members: Alan White/Ian Parry Officers: John Tradewell/Rob Salmon	Quarterly report.	a) That the information contained in the Integrated Performance and Financial Outturn Report be noted as the position as at the end of quarter one 2023/24. b) That the following information, which was not available at the meeting, be sent to Committee members: • Information on the national bench marking figures for re-referrals and where Staffordshire fell against that would be sent to the Committee for information. • Information on Wood burning use (paragraph 102 of the report). • Results of the SEND transport review as recommended by the MTFS working group 2022/23. • That Highway repairs be added to the key areas of concern as listed in the report, as this was one of the main complaints from local residents in most areas.

Work Programme 2023/24			
Date of Meeting	**Item**	**Details (Background)**	**Action / Outcome**
			c) That the O&S Chairs forum to asked to consider a review of the way that the Divisional Highway Programmes (DHP) funding is allocated, and the processes involved in identifying and progressing schemes. Members felt that once an issue had been identified and a feasibility study had been carried out, there was insufficient fund left to carry out the work. **Action –** information requested (b) emailed on 240823. (c) referred to Chair and Vice Chairs forum 12 October.
~~7 August 2023 (2pm)~~	~~Reserved for Call In~~		
~~4 September 2023~~	~~Reserved for Call In~~		
12 September 2023	**Overview and Scrutiny Work Programmes** Overview and Scrutiny Chairman	To ensure communication between the committees and no duplication	The work programmes for the four Overview and Scrutiny Committees were agreed.
	1.Corporate Complaints Annual Report 2021/22. **2.LGSCO Annual Report** Member: Alan White Officers: John Tradewell/Kate Bullivant	Annual reports	a) The Complaints team be thanked for their support and work undertaken over the past 12 months. **Action: Chairman thanked team on 22 09 23** b) the Complaints process training be included in the annual Members Training Programme. **Action : Included in annual training schedule for all members** a) Information on the online app working for android phones be

Work Programme 2023/24			
Date of Meeting	**Item**	**Details (Background)**	**Action / Outcome**
			reported to members after the meeting. Action: information emailed to members on 29 09 23
	Electoral Review of Staffordshire County Council: Draft Recommendations Member: Alan White Officers: Katie Marshall/Chris Ebberley	Update and presentation prior to Council 12 October	a) The progress on the County's Electoral Review was noted and the officers were thanked for their work during the review. b) That the comments from the Committee as listed above be referred to Cabinet as part of the consultation. **ACTION: Reported to Council on 12 October**
~~6 October 2023~~	~~Reserved for Call In~~		
6 November 2023 (was the 24 October 2023)	**Climate Change Annual report and action plan** Member: Simon Tagg Officers: James Cartwright	Pre decision scrutiny. Annual report	**Resolved:** a) That the Committee receive an update in 12 months time. b) That the comments made by the Committee, listed above, be reported to the Cabinet on 15 November 2023. **ACTION – reported to Cabinet on 15 November 2023.**
	Integrated Performance Report – Quarter 2 Members: Alan White/Ian Parry Officers: John Tradewell/Rob Salmon/Lyndsey Bissell	Regular quarterly report	a, That the Quarter 2 2023/24 Integrated Performance Report be noted. B, The tolerance on graph axis's should be changed, wherever practical, so that it starts at a number closer to the actual e.g. started at 90 if the data started at 94 and not zero.

Work Programme 2023/24			
Date of Meeting	**Item**	**Details (Background)**	**Action / Outcome**
			C, That the following information be provided to the committee: • The full list of schemes which had applied for covid funding as well as the successful ones. • A copy of the Cabinet (20/09/23) report entitled "SEND Accelerated Progress Plan: Enhanced Assess-Plan, Review Pathway, Strategy for Special Provision and the Staffordshire Children and Young People's Framework". • The financial impact of the new online financial self-assessment portal, as mentioned in Paragraph 41 of the report. An update on the Chatterley valley scheme slippage be sent to Councillor Yates directly. **ACTION: Emailed 27/11/23**
	Entrust – Review of changes Member: Mark Deaville Officers: Ian Turner	Requested at 25 October 2022 O&S to scrutinise changes and implications.	**Resolved:** That the Committee hold an informal meeting to discuss the possible future targets for the service. **ACTION: 24 January 2024 – Cllrs Wilcox, Pert, Francis and Yates**
	Climate Change Working Group report on Carbon Sequestration Officers: Deb Breedon	Climate Change Working Group final report. Cllr Thompson Chairman	The draft report and recommendations to Cabinet – 13 December 2023. Due to report back in Feb/March 2024 **ACTION: Response added to WP**
~~4 December 2023~~	Reserved for Call In cancelled		

18 December 2023	**Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion - Principles, Objectives and Action Plan update (to include gender pay gap update)** Member: Alan White Officers: S Getley	Requested at 25 October 2022 O&S to scrutinise changes and implications.	a) That work experience for care levers was encouraged with partners. b) That the information on the employment broker service and how to works with individuals to secure employment be provided to the committee after the meeting. **ACTION: Emailed 12/01/24**
	Peoples Strategy Member: Alan White Officers: S Getley	Suggested at triangulation June 2023. Scrutiny of actions taken. Fits with the Equality report above	a) That the progress made against the year 1 and year 2 priorities of 'Our People Strategy 2023-27' be noted. d) That future monitoring of performance be monitored through the committees Integrate performance quarterly report. e) That the following detailed information be provided to the committee after the meeting: • The number of colleagues affected by post covid 19 syndrome. • Bereavement support offered to colleagues • The usage of the new careers website, compared to previous months. **ACTION: Emailed 12/01/24**
	MFTS 2022-2027 Working Group Report Chair of COSC - Cllr Wilcox Rob Salmon/Rachel Spain		a) The draft report of the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) Working Group be approved. b) The report be referred to Cabinet at its meeting on 24 January 2024, to be considered as part of the draft budget setting process and that the Cabinet provide an executive response to the recommendations within two months of receipt of the report. c) That the working group be provided with a briefing on the governments

			settlement as soon as available and that any they suggest priority areas of investment for the Cabinet, if appropriate. d) That the Chairman be authorised to finalise the final report subject to any amendments made following the settlement briefing c) above. **ACTION: Briefing note © above sent out – no substantial change – no comments made. Cabinets response added to WP – April 2024**
~~5 January 2024~~	Reserved for Call In. cancelled		
~~24 January 2024~~	**Cancelled**		
February 2024	Reserved for Call In **Cancelled**		
26 February 2024	**Quarterly Integrated Performance report (Quarter 3)** Members: Alan White Officers: John Tradewell/Rob Salmon/Lynsey Bissell	Regular quarterly report	f) That data for a longer period of time (e.g. annual or over 2 or 3 years) would be useful to see an annual trend, particularly in EHCP and Category 3 highway repairs. g) That the following information be provided to the committee: • The criteria for Home upgrade funding for off grid (mains gas supply) properties and if this related to postcodes. • Business startup rates - A link to the monthly survey. • The plan to improve the quality of care providers, as rated by the CQC. • **ACTION: Briefing note provided**

	~~Corporate Plan/ Delivery Plan~~		
	~~Progress and next steps for Staffordshire's digital strategy~~	~~Input into the refresh of the strategy~~	Moved to 9 April meeting
	Joint Local Enterprise Committee Members: Philip White/Alan White Officers: Darryl Eyres/ Anthon Hodge	Pre decision scrutiny prior to Cabinet – March 2024. Forward plan item.	a) That the approach to form a Joint Enterprise Delivery Committee with Stoke-on-Trent City Council and the draft Terms of Reference for the Joint Enterprise Delivery Committee with Stoke-on-Trent City Council ("Joint Committee") be noted. b) The proposal, that ahead of the Joint Committee being established and once the reserves of the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (SSLEP) were formally transferred to the County Council as the accountable body, it was being recommended that Cabinet agree to the immediate ring-fencing of funding for the Growth Hub, Careers Hub and Local Visitor Economy Partnership as key economic programmes for the local area was noted. c) It was agreed that subject to the Cabinet decisions referred to in recommendation b) above being approved, the Prosperous Overview & Scrutiny Committee monitor delivery through the 6-monthly Economic Strategy Delivery Update, as the committee responsible for such matters. **Action: Noted at Cabinet**
	Overview and Scrutiny Work Programmes	To ensure communication between the committees and no duplication	Noted

	Overview and Scrutiny Chairman		
8 March 2024 ~~Reserved for call-in~~ **Informal workshop/meeting**	**Consideration of any call ins**	No call-ins	
	~~Informal meeting Corporate Plan/ Delivery Plan~~	~~Moved from 26/02/24~~	Moved to April- date TBC
	Informal meeting Community Strategy Members: Victoria Wilson Officers: Cathrine Mann/Lynsey Bissell/Pete Barker		Notes attached to the work programme for information
~~8 April 2024~~	~~Reserved for Call In~~	~~Cancelled~~	
8 April 2024	**Progress and next steps for Staffordshire's digital strategy** Members: Ian Parry Officers: John Tradewell /Lynsey Bissell	Input into the refresh of the strategy	
	Customer Services strategy Members: Alan White/Ian Parry Officers: Tracy Thorley/ Emily Doorbar	Pre decision scrutiny	
	Climate Change Working Group report on Carbon Sequestration- Cabinets response Members: Simon Tagg	Cabinet (170123) response to the working groups report.	

	Officers: James Cartwright	
	MTFS Working Group – Cabinets response Members: Ian Parry Officers: Rachel Spain	Cabinet (240123) response to the working groups report.
29 April 2024 Council chamber	Reserved for Call In	

Items for Consideration or needing more detail– Work Programme 2023/24 and 2024/25. Includes items raised at triangulation meetings and pending items.		
Suggested Item	**Details (Background)**	**Proposed Date of Meeting**
Leadership Board Raised at triangulation meeting	Already in the work programme as pending. Leader suggested scrutiny of priorities	Priorities going to CEO board in March. Mtg with Chair 31/11/23 – report to Chair and vice chairs in the first instance. Leader requested scrutiny in September 2024. In draft work programme
BEST Transformation and the impact on the children's transformation	Raised at triangulation 08/11/22.	Discussion on appropriate time with Tracy Thorley. Very early stages of redesign – Report to committee for pre decision scrutiny
Scrutiny of the **Local Enterprise Partnership** – Officer Pete Shakespeare	Previously annual scrutiny in January each year. LEP now transferring to LA. Felt that an update on transition would be more useful. Approx June 2024. Set up of Joint Local Enterprise Committee – February 2024 – Forward plan item	26 February 2024
Cyber Security Raised at triangulation meeting	Range of activity taking place currently – JT suggested early 2024. Ian Turner is lead officer	Briefing paper to Committee members in early 2024. – Can be discussed at O&S meeting if required.
Legal function Raised at triangulation meeting	How do they operate, their offer	No decisions to be taken or performance to be monitored. Information gathering session Member briefing session-January 2024

Staffordshire County Council

Items for Consideration or needing more detail– Work Programme 2023/24 and 2024/25. Includes items raised at triangulation meetings and pending items.		
Suggested Item	**Details (Background)**	**Proposed Date of Meeting**
Planning Raised at triangulation meeting	As above (legal services)	Chair to talk to Chair of Planning Committee
Customer services Raised at triangulation meeting	Performance – are we getting it right for the public	Draft strategy being developed. 9 April O&S
Delivery plan Raised at triangulation meeting	To be considered with the Corporate Plan	Informal March 2024 meeting
Digital Strategy Raised at triangulation meeting	To consider the strategy when appropriate if it covers corporate issues. Prosperous O&S consider digital infrastructure.	9 April 2024
Climate Change Working Group report on Carbon Sequestration- cabinets response Members: Simon Tagg Officers: James Cartwright	Due 2 months after it is considered at Cabinet	April 2024
MTFS Working Group report - cabinets response Members: Ian Parry Officers: Rachel Spain	Due 2 months after it is considered at Cabinet	April 2024

Updates/ Briefing Notes / Visits 2023/24			
Date	**Item**	**Details (Background)**	**Action / Outcome**
24 January 2024: informal meeting Cllrs Wilcox, Francis Pert.	Entrust https://moderngov.staffordshire.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=604&MId=16602&Ver=4 Following 6 November Corporate meeting	Notes attached for information (26 February 2024)	Update to Committee if contract or relationship with Entrust changes.
8 March – informal	Informal meeting -Community Strategy	Notes attached for information	Members event 21 March 2024

Updates/ Briefing Notes / Visits 2023/24			
Date	**Item**	**Details (Background)**	**Action / Outcome**
committee meeting			
Working Groups / Inquiry Days 2023/2024			
MTFS Working Group	• Cllr M Wilcox (Chair) • Cllr B Peters • Cllr N Yates • Cllr J Pert • Cllr G Heath • Cllr S Thompson • Cllr J Oates		Draft report submitted to Committee 18 December. Executive response to Cttee April 2024.
Climate Change Working Group	Membership • Cllr S Thompson (Chair) • Cllr C Wileman • Cllr N Yates • Cllr T Clements • Cllr J Pert • Cllr B Peters • Cllr D Smith	Draft report submitted to Committee 6 November. Reported to Cabinet early 2024. Executive response to Cttee April 2024.	

Membership – County Councillors 2022-23	Calendar of Committee Meetings – 2023-24
Samantha Thompson (Chairman) Gill Heath (Vice Chairman - Scrutiny) Charlotte Atkins Tina Clements Mike Davies John Francis Jeremy Oates Jeremy Pert Bernard Peters Kath Perry Bob Spencer Mike Worthington	5 June 2023 (reserved for call-ins) - cancelled
	20 June 2023
	6 July 2023 (reserved for call-ins) - cancelled
	1 August 2023
	7 August 2023 (2pm) (reserved for call-ins) - cancelled
	1 September 2023 (reserved for call-ins) - cancelled
	12 September 2023
	6 October 2023 (reserved for call-ins) - cancelled
	24 October 2023 (reserved for call-ins) - cancelled
	6 November 2023
	4 December 2023 (reserved for call-ins) - cancelled
	18 December 2023
	5 January 2024 (reserved for call-ins) - cancelled
	24 January 2024
	9 February 2024 (reserved for call-ins)
	26 February 2024
	8 March 2024 (reserved for call-ins)followed by a private informal workshop
	8 April 2024 (reserved for call-ins)
	9 April 2024
	29 April 2024 (reserved for call-ins)

<u>Notes of an informal meeting to discuss the Community Strategy</u>
<u>8 March 2024</u>

Present: Cllrs Thompson, Perry, Peters, and Spencer.
Officers: Catharine Mann and Pete Barker.

The informal meeting was to consider the development of the Community Strategy and in particular, the engagement process and results. The engagement had received 2,106 resident survey responses, 236 engaged in face to face conversations and 92 partner survey responses.

The results of the engagement were being analysed and a full report would be available soon.

There would be a member event on 21 March and the developed strategy would come before Corporate O&S Committee for pre decision scrutiny in July 2024.

The Members present offered the following comments:
- The response rate was considered to be viable, particularly given the partnership consultees.
- There was surprise that only 10% of respondents were concerned about green issues.
- It was felt that there was a lack knowledge in the community over the functions and services local authorities had control over.
- There was a need to manage public expectations as people who responded may expect action to take place.
- The term 'pride' can mean different things to different people.
- There were opportunities to build on existing neighbourhood groups such as neighbourhood watch.
- Members felt that it would be useful to see the more detailed analysis. This could enable a targeted approach to consultation of areas of the community or groups who haven't responded.
- Schools/Libraries/supermarkets had provided good response rates.
- Social media could be used in a better way.
- The question of how to enable volunteering without making the system bureaucratic with health and safety or permissions etc was raised as an issue.
- Links needed to be made with other corporate strategies such as the climate change strategy, the cultural strategy or the Digital strategy.
- The 'Mans Shed' project; allotment groups; cost of living groups; printed and posted questionnaires would be considered in some areas to increase participation.