# Transformation Board Minutes of Meeting held on Thursday 20 June 2024

## Present:

Chair, Gerard Curran, Commissioner

Denise Murray, Finance Commissioner

## Members:

Cllr Dexter Smith – Leader, with responsibility for Improvement and Recovery

Cllr Wal Chahal - Deputy Leader, and Lead for Financial Oversight and Council Assets

## Officers

Will Tuckley – Interim Chief Executive and Head of Paid Services

Sue Butcher - Executive Director, Children's Services, Chief Executive Slough Children's Services

Sukdave Ghuman (Monitoring Officer)

Marc Gadsby (ED People Adults)

Stephen Menzies (Interim Director Digital and Technology)

Jane Senior (Strategic Commissioning Change)

Sarah Wilson (Assistant Director, Legal & Governance, HB Law)

Dave McNamara (Interim Director of Financial Management)

Chris Holme. Interim Finance Director

Allison Kennedy, Head of Customer Service

Sarah Wilson, Assistant Director Legal and Governance

## Secretariat

Mandy Brown (Chief of Staff)

Nasreen Brittain (Executive Assistant to Commissioners), minutes

Also present      Dave Hounsell, Acting Head of Service, Chief Executive's Office

Andrew Merritt-Morling, Programme Manager

Deemple Brain, Programme Manager

Stephanie Clark, Programme Manager

Alex Polak, Head of Governance and Scrutiny

Bal Toor, Director of HR

## Apologies for Absence

Gavin Jones, Lead Commissioner

Cllr Pavitar Mann - Leader of the Opposition

Annabel Scholes (Interim Executive Director of Finance and Commercial Services and S.151 Officer)

Patrick Hayes - Executive Director Housing, Property and Planning

**Minutes**

## 1. Welcome and Introductions

- None.

## 2. Declarations of Interest:

- No declarations of interest expressed.

## 3. Minutes and Actions from Board held on 16 May 2024

- Minutes from the meeting held on 16 May 2024 were approved as a correct record.

- Action: Sue Butcher to provide Ged with appraisal data. Bal Toor provided update on the appraisals where she reflected on a 20% completion rate. This was not ideal across the business. She was sending lists to EDs to cascade to the team members who have not completed appraisals. Some were incomplete in the system, others misaligned to Line Manager. Continuing with Comms campaign to hold EDs accountable. Ged expressed concern over this percentage. Capacity of the hierarchy to put emphasis on this and hold staff to account. Senior managers needed to see this as important to deliver, set the targets and meet them. These were actions that could be done if the will was there. It's within the grasp of senior staff and the organisation and is a real test to achieve. Bal confirmed the deadline set for completion of appraisals is end July.

## 4. Programme Update (Stephanie Clark)

- A lot of positive work has been done over the past month around getting the structures in place. Risks have been collated into an overarching risk register. Risks identified in highlight reports, concerns over capacity within the teams. Staff doing work alongside their existing roles. Resource plans will be key going forward. Feedback mechanisms to measure impacts.

- Dashboard, last slide, is proposed new highlight report. Gives clarity at end of each month as to what has been achieved. SRO signoff slot also included. This template will be put into circulation going forward. Denise said the financial status was unclear. Financial status on evidence based decision making was not finance related for example. Recognised in some of the areas there are challenges. Churn will continue to exist, however, that cannot prevent the programme from continue. Cannot start again each time a member of the team leaves. This cannot be the reason for things pausing. Need to get something in place, good handovers, really understand the 'as is' position. Stephanie agreed. Clear PID is in place for each programme to mitigate this risk. Clear documentation across all workstreams will sit with the transformation team. Want to avoid double reporting. Currently trying to look specially at the progress of the projects. Denise said needed a dashboard that covers every area. This will allow for monitoring and tracking. This was raised in the finance board earlier.

## 5. Workstream Update: Target Operating Model (Andrew Merritt-Morling)

- At the time of the last Transformation Board, had just received the mandate by CLT to push ahead with the delivery of the TOM. First 'as is' workshops took place with adult social care teams. These will combine 'as is' and 'to be' positions. The challenge will be to get everything done within the 3-4 hours of the workshop.

- The first of these took place yesterday with Adult Social Care colleagues.

- There will be a concentrated number of workshops taking place between 17th June and 17th July – combining both the 'As Is' and 'To Be'.

- There are two "As Is" workshops planned for each Directorate to establish the 'As Is', each lasting up to 3.5hrs in duration.

- Outputs from each of the Directorate Workshops will be validated by the relevant Directorates in the days following the conclusion of each pair of workshops

- In addition to the vertical Directorate Workshops outlined, there will be 6 cross-cutting "Themed Workshops" that will look to identify a future "To Be" state in the following areas:
    1. Customer Access / Front Door
    2. Digital First
    3. Temporary Accommodation (inc. benefits payments)
    4. Income generation, fees and charges
    5. Flexible Workforce and Culture
    6. Strategic Commissioning and Contract & Performance Management

    This will form the basis of the first iteration of the TOM and will be based on the principles of taking a "One Council" view.

    These workshops will comprise both Directorates and cross-cutting colleagues who make up the weekly "TOM Delivery Group".

    As part of the demonstration of aligning the work of the TOM with the finances, these weekly meetings are now chaired by Annabel Scholes, with Andrew Merritt-Morling deputising.

- Delays have not endangered the overall timeline of November. Continued vigilance is being applied, however. Andrew confirmed to Cllr Chahal that the team was getting the required commitment/buy-in from CLT. There is a funding request as well. Dave Hounsell responded to say should be using the opportunity to align the TOM with the deteriorated financial situation and would revise the framework of the workshops as a result.

    - Andrew confirmed The cost cutting workshop fees, invest to save and capital investment would be picked up with finance colleagues. Denise said the team needed to be thinking about how things are going to be done differently. Finance can only do due diligence. Andrew said these have been included as key lines of enquiry.
    - In terms of overall deliverability, things are on track to host the workshops required to inform the first substantive draft of the TOM by 24th July.
    - There are understandable challenges around capacity to deliver, but at the moment, despite some minor delays, these are not endangering the overarching timeline agreed at CLT which is to aim for a final draft of the TOM to November Cabinet, in-line with key finance documents.
    - However, applying continued vigilance around the risks and manage these before they become issues.

- Ged said the organisation can find it difficult to envisage how things will be done differently going forward. Were people able to engage with the re-vision of the Council? Andrew said staff engagement forums were being held to address this. Some staff understood this, while others saw it as mechanism to reduce jobs; and felt internal strategic communications on this were it had been raised for some time, and will go external as well, which will need to be managed.

- Will said good feedback had been received from the workshops held on Tuesday 18 June. These will be addressed with staff openly and transparently. It was incumbent on everyone to talk about the potential the TOM has and work with those concerned to deliver it. Cllr Chahal also wanted a critical lens to be applied. Andrew responded he was not sure what parameters the Council was working within. Cllr Chahal said it needed to be realistic. The Leader said at some point around September/October will need to take this to public consultation and they will want to know how it will benefit them. So, will need to communicate that with one message they can people can buy into. Denise wanted to know if political discussions were taking place on the 'to be' position. The Leader responded Cabinet were having an Away Day with CLT where this would be discussed. Looking at getting every resident to have an online account

where engagement could be channelled. Cllr Chahal said red lines had been discussed with CEx and Andrew. Statutory services need to be maintained where possible and using the voluntary sector where not. Partnership with the residents and how this will be formed had also been discussed. It was recognised that partnerships would be paramount and is hoped these will be the underpinning of the workshops.

- Alex Polak said discussions had been had at CLT regarding the paper to Cabinet. Lead Members and Directors meetings was another platform being used. Cllr Chahal said he wanted the Opposition to be involved in this process as he did not want to impose anything on them.

## 6. Workstream Update: Customer Experience: (Allison Kennedy)

**6.1.** Customer Service provide the front door for residents contacting Slough Borough Council for the following services;

Adult Social Care, Council Tax, Housing Benefit, Council Tax Support, Housing Services, Environmental Services, School admissions * and Electoral Services*

The telephony lines are operated seasonally when there is an election or during periods of school admissions

The channels of contact are by telephone, face to face, email and eforms. The team also process bus passes and Blue badge applications. During the period April 23-March 24 the centre received a total of 218,460 contacts. Benchmarked against other organisations and changed the telephony system. Quality impact assessments were also happening.

- SARA chatbot launched as well as translation services had made a positive impact. will start to track the benefits of this. Usage so far: 1112 users; 2580 questions asked. Council Tax is the most frequently requested service. English, Polish and Romanian are the three most frequent languages used so far. The next service for development of the bot is Electoral Services.

- Essex County Council (ECC) visited Slough Contact Centre in February 2024. They conducted a number of interviews with the team from Advisor and Team Leader level and produced a report capturing their outcomes and recommendations. They offered some insight and suggestions from their learned experience which are listed below.

**Key observations**

- Significant gap in the leadership structure with no business champion advocating for operational excellence

- No clear strategic direction with mixed messages about its sense of purpose

- Customer Service was described as an afterthought (perception) for most service areas, although engagement with them had improved

- Absence of standard operating procedures resulting in inconsistency of service delivery

- Lack of routine for operational procedures contributing to a chaotic work environment

- Lack of awareness and understanding regarding the use of data and insights in driving a decision-making process this has Led to missed opportunities for performance improvement

- Good Telephony platform 8x8 however team are unaware of its capabilities or what elements have been procured

- No mechanism in place to capture customer feedback which can lead to a disconnect between customer expectations and service delivery

- Despite challenges there is enthusiasm among the team to make a difference, staff members expressed a willingness to participate in initiatives aimed at addressing the identified deficiencies

**6.2.** Allison Kennedy reported she had noticed lack of performance framework. Regularly have a team huddle, looking at previous day's performance. Want staff to do things in the best way, not necessarily the historical way. As a team they will be in 2 days a week to start, increasing to 3 over time. This has created a good environment. Have focused on appraisals over the last month as well, with only two not completed due to long term sickness. Have done a tactical service plan as well.

**6.3.** Don't have an effective demand model. Need to start using the intelligence to schedule rotas accordingly. Don't have resilience in business continuity. When telephones go down, there is nowhere else for the Service to go to operate.

- **Investment required:**

  i. Workforce planning tool – standard contact centre platform that's forecast and schedules demand pulling information from telephony system broken down into 15 minutes intervals giving you the best chance to fulfil the demand presented, produces rotas and works out shift patterns builds in sickness absence and annual leave. Awaiting indicative costs from 8x8 Telephony provider and ROI business case

  ii. Business Analyst/ Project resource required to hold workshops with CS and services to map process and procedures – reviewing what can be automated/reduce double handling and provide consistency of service.

  iii. Jadu CRM system needs to be amended to add more categories and subcategories for all services that CS is the front door to gain data and insight. Changes to the system needed to measure first time resolution / failure demand / avoidable contact.

  iv. Business case being drawn up with changes required and submitted to Digital colleagues.

  v. Power BI/Automated dashboard required for performance reporting – currently working of numerous spreadsheets with no single view of individual/team/department performance.

  vi. Third party supplier required re business continuity plan.

  Don't have to wait for the TOM to put the basics in place.

**6.4.    Risks:**

- Lack of insight and data could lead to the wrong decisions being made.

- Lack of resource needed to undertake tactical changes - CS is an operational team with no business support capability

- Change fatigue - Previous change programmes have had an impact on services, buy in and morale.

- Specialist teams buy-in - they  will need to work in tandem with CS change and timescales so that any backlogs/failure demand  is identified and cleared so that overall end to end journey is improved and not just the front door-

- **Questions:** Denise congratulated Allison on the progress made. Feedback from Essex CC on the changes needed to be made, primarily to get the basics right. Demonstrating the culture change. Denise wanted to know how vulnerable residents will be included who cannot access Council services digitally. Allison responded that language can be a barrier so will need to look at that. Need to understand where the vulnerable residents are and which hubs they could access. Need to do some good profiling to find out where they are in the Borough and how they can be accessed and assisted. Doesn't require there to be a physical location, once the data is used, can go into the community to deliver it.

- Sarah Wilson responded that the languages most using the translation services were Polish and Romany. Bal added that she had listened in to live residents' calls and found them quite moving. The staff however, responded in a bespoke way to match the needs of the caller, and she wanted to acknowledge that.

- Dave Hounsell said there were actions to enhance the insight element for customer services. Will use Power BI to support.

- Stephen Menzies said the elderly were not to be pigeonholed as digitally marginalised as in Slough the younger generation were more marginalised as they struggled to get access to broadband etc.

- Ged reflected that good leadership could bring the team along on the journey and congratulated Allison on doing this very well.

- The average wait time was 34 minutes, which was far too long. In the summer of 2023 scrutiny committee looked at this problem to address the excessive wait times. A digital system was agreed with a telephony system as backup. The Council, however, had did nothing about it. Ged said there was a danger this could happen again if the entire organisation was not fully engaged.

- The Essex CC review showed the Council was contemptuous of its residents. The Council has no idea where the calls had gone after shutting down the access to residents. The primacy of residents has not featured as a concern and how it affects the organisation to date. That is the history of what the residents have been told the Council would do, so there may be some cynicism from residents when they hear the new proposals.

## 7. Proposed merger between Governance and Scrutiny and the evidence-based decision making workstreams: (Sarah Wilson/Dave Hounsell)

Throughout the Jim Taylor report there is reference to lack of evidence or data in the following situations:

    i.    no evidence in audits to demonstrate expenses claims should be made.

    ii.    no evidence of reporting to committee or CLT on use of s.106 monies (d) no evidence of suitable risk assessments being carried out on planned savings and inadequate contingency

    iii.    inadequate business cases to inform decision-making

    iv.    no evidence of understand of entirety of investments being made or financial implications of its investments

    v.    poor quality advice to members and poor quality reports to members

    vi.    poor quality HR and finance data

    vii.    lack of reporting on LGA comparative or other benchmarking data.

    viii.    Have had assurance CLT and plans in the past, but they have slipped over time. Important to say there is still quite a lot of work to be done to get the basics back in place. The basics and transformation are closely linked.

    **Since that date:**

    ix.    s.24 recommendation on Observatory House decision, stating that the decision was made with reference to inadequate information at a formal member meeting.

    x.    A & C G Committee has also had a report from Grant Thornton on the themes causing the delay in 2018/19 accounts.

    xi.    Published 2019/20 and 2020/21 value for money assessment will be very critical of decisions made in relation to strategic acquisitions, governance of external entities and transparency.

**Outcomes:**

xii. Ensure continuous improvement - Prioritising learning and development, striving to learn from past mistakes, address under-performance and avoid continuing in a direction where failure is evident.

xiii. Openness to challenge and support - ensuring regular benchmarking, participating in external reviews and using appropriate performance metrics to measure performance.

Effective approach to risk management - effective scrutiny programme focused on improvement, effective internal control mechanisms leading to appropriate understanding of and management of risk.

xiv. Resident focused - appropriate engagement mechanisms to inform decisions, including engagement with harder to reach communities and individuals and service plans being evidence based and aligns to corporate priorities.

xv. Effective system of governance for decision-making - effective procedures in place and followed to ensure compliance with Nolan Principles, value for money and proper member oversight.

xvi. Culture of cooperation, respect and trust - commitment to transparency, ethical use of data, decision making at the right level and promotion and adherence to the highest ethical standards and effective partnership working.

xvii. Effective use of resources - financial strategy and budgets aligned to strategic priorities, with appropriate use of fixed and workforce resources and robust system of internal control.

Alex Polak responded that this was one of the frameworks which were being worked on to develop the Democratic Governance update report scheduled for Transformation Board in September.

Sue Butcher responded that need to see where the Company SCF is situated in all the scenarios so updates can be given to the Board.

## 8. Reframing of Strategic Commissioning Workstream: (Marc Gadsby)

- Currently acknowledging some valuable work in people commissioning. Significant savings are attached to strategic commissioning. Level of confidence in the data so far has not been high, which has impacted on decision making.

- Overall operating model was being developed. There will be space within each of the TOM workshops for commissioning colleagues and Marc would be part of that discussion to determine what opportunities there may be for Strategic Commissioning. Principles are to expedite work around people and bring back within a defined timeline, and complete the contracts register. Will said the work to be done, how this is approached, and the range of options will be critical to success of the model. However, the Authority will need to deliver on it. Denise thanked Marc for his presentation. Acknowledged there was a huge opportunity here that needs to be resourced properly. Denise reflected Commissioners have not seen the resource plan. There is also a real need to move at pace.

**Action: Marc to share resource plan with Denise soonest**

- Sarah agreed the need to move at pace. The new procurement act provides fresh opportunities as well.

## 9. Transformation Fund Requests: (Dave Hounsell)

- Resourcing: to create a TOM team for 6 Months. This followed the new process approved last month. Three business cases were submitted to the Recovery Board. One to be funded through the DSG funded grant, not transformation board budget. One proposal had come forward today. Will make sure this is a standing item going forward.

> **Action Nasreen/Dave Hounsell to add Business Cases to the standing agenda.**

- Approval to spend up to £329,400K to staff the TOM team to provide: 2 project managers, and 2 project support officers. In addition, there is a requirement to provide 2 strategic functions that will focus on two key aspects of the TOM.

- The request was for the total is approved and to be allocated to the transformation team. Denise thanked Andrew for the context.

    **Action: Dave McNamara and Chris Holme to review the expenditure request.**

    Business case proposition will be subject to finance review. Marc said this had been reviewed.

    **Action: Mark Gadsby/Allison Kennedy to provide indicative figures from adults and customer services need to be included in this breakdown and recirculated.**

    **Outcome: Ged confirmed the Board approved this request.**

    The funds for ICT are fully allocated. The agreed process is for the recovery board to put forward proposals for the transformation fund, however, if any requests are urgent and need consideration before the monthly cycle, then Annabel Scholes and Will Tuckley can put them to Ged to fast track that route. Observed the challenge was to look at things in a more holistic way, and not as individual requests.

- Andrew wanted clarity on the EPC process. Did this now need to go through the EPC process. Agreed to take the discussion on this offline.

- **Discipline of paper submission:** this had been very good for the first two Boards, however, submissions for this board had not gone to schedule. Going forwards, all papers need to be submitted on the Friday before the Board, in particular finance papers if informed decisions are to be made. Ged reminded colleagues that late papers will be removed from future agendas.

    **Outcome agreed: all papers for the transformation must be submitted the Friday before for review by the Chair. Any late items would be removed from the agenda with an explanation as to why.**

## 10. Forward Plan – updates due at next Board:

- **Workforce**

- **Governance & Scrutiny (September Board)**

- Already been agreed that governance and scrutiny update will go to September Board. That leaves just workforce on agenda for July. Agreed to take discussion of the July Board agenda with the team.

## 11. AOB:

- None.

**The meeting closed at 13.30pm**.

**Date of next meeting: Thursday 18 July 2024 at 12:00pm**