

Divisions Affected – NONE

**Performance and Corporate Services
Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

17 JUNE 2022

Agile Working, Organisational Development and ICT

**Report by Corporate Director –
Customers and Organisational Development**

RECOMMENDATION

1. **The Performance and Corporate Services Committee is RECOMMENDED to:**

Consider this report and its accompanying annexes. Where necessary to seek further information on points of strategy or policy clarification from the Cabinet Member and operational or specialist clarification from officers, with a view to making suggested improvements, additions or refinements to the proposed approaches.

Executive Summary

2. This paper brings together three key workstreams which aim to enable and support the organisation and its workforce in terms of technology, arrangements for agile working and more broadly employee engagement and organisational development. These three workstreams are:
 - The IT, Digital and Innovation Strategy (Annex 1)
 - A framework for agile working (Annex 2)
 - Organisational Development and Employee Engagement Programme Delivering the Future Together (Annex 3).
3. These three workstreams are closely linked, as technology must effectively underpin agile working. Likewise, learning, support, development and employee engagement are required if a modern and agile workplace is to remain productive, efficient and effective.
4. Lessons learnt from the Covid pandemic have supported the design of the organisational development programme and the agile working framework. Whilst the County Council was in a fairly strong position with regards to the

technological capability required to facilitate remote and agile working, it was clear that managers and staff needed greater support to maximise the capabilities of the technology available as well as new approaches to effectively support and develop modern ways of working that include managing a remote or hybrid workforce.

5. In 2019 a five-year IT and Digital Strategy (with supporting technology road map) was developed and adopted as part of the council's transformation priorities. This strategy has just undergone a mid-point review, reflecting on both the changing national context as well as the post pandemic working environment. This revised document is set out at Annex 1. The focus of the first iteration of this strategy was updating IT infrastructure and modernising the design and customer focus of the service. The midpoint review has strengthened the focus on cyber security, added sections on innovation, data and analytics reflecting the requirements of the organisation to develop digital solutions at greater pace to meet service requirements, the opportunities that are presented by technologies such as automation or low coding and challenges such as digital inclusion.
6. During 2020 the council launched a significant employee engagement activity to set out the organisation's values and create a behavioural framework by which to guide organisational development. This programme is known as Delivering the Future Together and is a holistic approach to organisational development and employee engagement, one of the key projects within this programme has been the develop of the framework for agile working.

Delivering the Future Together (DTFT) – Our Programme for Organisational Development and Employee Engagement.

7. The stated aims and outcomes for the programme are:

Oxfordshire County Council is flexible, responsive, and committed to working in partnership to make Oxfordshire a greener, fairer and healthier county.

By living our values and working together we can build on our strengths, make continued improvements to every aspect of what we do, and have an even greater impact on the lives of the people and communities of Oxfordshire.

Delivering the Future Together is our programme for change to help us become a great place to work and the organisation we want to be. It is made up of many different initiatives, which will enable us to evolve and adapt, develop new skills and new ways of working. Together we will look to the future, its challenges, and opportunities

We want to provide a great employee experience for our people where they can thrive and flourish knowing that they are treated with respect and dignity during their time with us. We know that delivering services across Oxfordshire can only be achieved by a workforce that is motivated, engaged, and capable and where everyone feels invested in as an individual.

We want our people to love working for us, recommending us as an employer of choice to their friends and family, confident in the culture and ways of working that is set and driven from the top. We want to be a flexible and adaptable organisation to support the needs of the people of Oxfordshire and our workforce.

8. The first phase of the programme (which completed in 2021) included the recruitment of a network of around 200 employee champions, a staff survey and an ambitious programme of staff engagement to identify ‘what works well’ and where things could be ‘even better if’. The result of this engagement was the launch of a suite of organisational values and a behavioural framework directly drawn from the experiences and aspirations of the workforce. This engagement also led to the establishment of a set of development projects reflecting the priorities and concerns of the organisation. These projects form the second phase of the programme (which commenced in autumn 2021) and are set out in the table below:

Table 1: DTFT Projects

Project Name	Description	Phase	Status
Organisational Values and Behaviours	Development of aspirational set of values and a behavioural framework for managers and staff	1	<i>Completed and launched.</i>
Employee Champions	Target of 180 champions to support better workforce engagement and participation	1	<i>Target exceeded– ongoing rounds of recruitment to ensure all services are covered. First champions conference planned for end June 2022.</i>
12,3,2 managing for performance	Comprehensive training programme for all line managers to undertake more effective 1:1s, team development and personal development planning.	1	<i>Ongoing – on track (high levels of participation and train the trainer approach has been undertaken).</i>
Internal Communications and engagement	Full review of all means of engagement and communications.	2	<i>On track. Survey completed action plan agreed by SLT. Project implementation underway.</i>
Agile working	Developing of a new framework and materials to support agile working.	2	<i>On track, framework developed following engagement. EJCC June and launch of support material end June 2022.</i>
Employee Recognition	Improve approach too employee recognition and benefits (NB pay and reward outside project scope) in line with values framework.	2	<i>On track – new recognition platform (to include employee benefits) to be launch in autumn 2022.</i>
Leadership and management	Reprovisioning of all leadership and management development activities	2	<i>Project underway, some delays. Capacity issues have delayed the development of a specification for new leadership and management development programme. Legacy arrangements are in place. Whilst this reflects a delay there has been an improvement in the usage of the apprenticeship levy for management and professional development.</i>

Recruitment and Onboarding	Workflow improvements and a modernisation of the employer offer.	2	<i>Project underway and deliverables such as revised templates produced. It should be noted that the external recruitment environment has dramatically shifted since this project was scoped and following feedback a more fundamental review of the employer brand and offer has been commissioned. This project will therefore widen in scope and continue into phase 3 of the programme.</i>
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9. Alongside these key projects the HR team continue to review and modernise policy and practice. In the last 18 months this has included the relaunch of the councils policies with regards to bullying, harassment and discrimination and a new zero tolerance policy for violent, abusive or threatening behaviour towards council employees. Quarterly activity updates are published and received by Cabinet and set out planned HR policy work and 'business as usual learning and development activities – both of which contribute to the wider organisational development context.

A framework for Agile Working

10. One of the key projects within the DTFT programme has been the development of a framework for agile working. The approach has been to take the lessons from Covid to engage with managers, employee champions and representatives and ensure that managers have the support and operational accountability to develop the right agile solutions for their services in the long term and not just as part of the immediate post pandemic period. The council has been driven by a desire to balance the needs of service users, current and prospective employees and is clear that one solution will not meet the needs of all services and that rigid rules are the very antithesis of agility.
11. To help managers to develop agile solutions that support service delivery a framework and set of toolkits and guidance documents have been produced. The production of these documents has been undertaken with the express engagement of employee champions and managers as well as a wider review of good practice. This includes the development of four work types to help ensure that the right technological and workplace solutions can be put in place to support the different types of roles across the council. As an employer OCC is clear that anyone that does not wish to work from home does not have to, and at this stage there are no plans to offer wholesale home-based contracts. All council buildings are open for work and investment has been made to improve and increase our capabilities to support hybrid working. The council is also developing a property strategy which will set out the longer-term development plans for the council's estate including the development of appropriate and modern workplace environments. The draft framework is set out at annex 2. The status of this document is draft pending final engagement at EJCC.

Corporate Policies and Priorities

12. The agile working framework, organisational development and IT, Digital and Innovation strategies aim to enable and support an effective workforce. These approaches sit alongside other council strategies such as customer contact, equalities, diversity and inclusion and digital inclusion to ensure that services are delivered in a fair and accessible way.

Financial Implications

13. There are no financial implications arising from this support, the various strategies and frameworks referred to in this document are delivered via established departmental and service budgets and documents such as the IT, Digital and Innovation Strategy and the identified capital budget that supports its delivery.

Legal Implications

14. There are no legal implications arising from this report. Any future HR policy change will be subject to the usual employment laws and formal consultation arrangements. Implementation of the IT strategy will rely on investment and effective relationships with third party suppliers. As such procurement and contract management arrangements are key to the governance of this service.

Staff Implications

15. The agile working framework sets out an operating model for OCC managers and employees. There are no specific staffing implications arising from the framework as there are no terms, conditions, contractual or policy changes proposed. The organisational development programme aims to support and develop the workforce, likewise the ICT strategy is designed to enable service delivery and the provision of technology to support this.

Equality and Inclusion Implications

16. The agile working framework, organisational development and IT strategies are all key to enabling equity and inclusivity within the workplace. Likewise, these strategies should also work alongside service plans and council strategies to deliver flexible and accessible services for local residents. ICT can facilitate greater accessibility and inclusion for both employees and customers through the utilisation of technology and approaches to broadening digital inclusion. The agile working framework sits alongside and aims to complement policies such as flexitime and flexible working, whilst it enables opportunities for remote and home working it does not require or set out specific contractual arrangements to do so.

Sustainability Implications

17. This paper has no direct sustainability implications. However, it should be noted that effective agile working can support the reduction of work-related travel thereby reducing both costs and emissions. In the longer term it may also contribute to a rationalisation of council property assets. The IT, Digital and Innovation strategy sets out how ICT can directly contribute to the County Council's net zero commitment through activities such as procurement and working with the supply chain, paper lite and analytics to understand and measure impact.
18. In terms of learning and organisational development the Council supports various climate related training (for example Carbon literacy) and has worked to embed stewardship of the environment in the council's values and behaviours, with an expectation to limit impact on the environment part of the 'taking responsibility' value. The organisational development team works with the climate action team to create a culture where climate action and awareness is part of everyone's role. A recent example is the council's leadership summit for its management cohort with climate matters headlining the agenda.

Risk Management

19. The risks associated with these areas of work are captured on the county council's strategic risk register. They include:
 - Cyber security – ensuring we have effective cyber and information security in a remote/cloud/digital environment.
 - Workforce management – ensuring that we have effective workforce plans, recruitment and retention strategies in place in one of the tightest employment markets seen in many years. This includes options for flexible and agile working.
 - Health and Safety – ensuring we have effective arrangements in place to support the health, safety and wellbeing of all employees regardless of their location or role type.

Consultations

20. Formal consultation has not been undertaken as part of this report. However, there are extensive customer and stakeholder engagement activities undertaken as part of the development of all three strands of work covered in this report.
21. ICT undertake customer feedback, senior stakeholder feedback and utilise a strategic business partner model to develop plans of work. Likewise, there is cross departmental representation on the Digital, Innovation and Customer programme board to ensure IT projects deliver the required benefits for the 'end-users'.

22. A key part of the Delivering the Future Together programme has been the establishment and support of an active network of employee champions who work effectively to feedback and shape the development of various plans. This has included direct participation in the development the agile framework.
23. The HR and OD team also work closely with the various unions and attend EJCC to ensure workforce representatives are engaged and updated on various plans, including the Delivering the Future Together programme and the agile working framework. At this stage no HR policy changes have been developed in relation to agile working and as such no formal consultations on policy, terms or conditions changes have been held. The County Council is aware that nationally work is underway to consider the impact of agile working on policy, terms and conditions. As OCC is part of this nationally negotiated framework, we will ensure that we constructively engage in any nationally recommended responses. If at any stage the county council sought to implement policy change the appropriate formal consultation arrangements would apply.

Claire Taylor
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- Annexes:
1. IT, Digital and Innovation Strategy 2019-24 (2022 Review DRAFT).
 2. DRAFT Agile Working Framework
 3. Delivering the Future Together – organisational development and employee engagement programme.

Background papers: Quarterly Cabinet Workforce and Staffing reports

These papers are all published on the county council's digital committee management system, providing a summary of HR and OD work undertaken and relevant workforce statistics. [Issue details - Workforce Report and Staffing Data - Quarter 4 - January-March 2022 \(oxfordshire.gov.uk\)](https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/issue-details-workforce-report-and-staffing-data-quarter-4-january-march-2022)

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