



REPORT TO: CORPORATE COMMITTEE ON 25 APRIL 2023

SUBJECT: IMPROVEMENT AND MODERNISATION PROGRAMME

BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (EDUCATION, COMMUNITIES AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT)

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the Committee of the progress made in developing the projects set out in the Council's Improvement and Modernisation Programme (IMP).
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III (A) 2 of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to considering Capital and Revenue Budgets and long term financial plans.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:
 - i) reviews and notes progress on the projects set out in the Council's Improvement and Modernisation Programme (IMP);
 - ii) recognises that the IMP is focussed on financial sustainability and to assist in managing risks associated with the ongoing budget position agrees to reduce the financial commitment to the poverty project and to take this work forward through a different use of resources.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Council has established an Improvement and Modernisation Programme to deliver transformational change across the authority, which was first approved by the Council on 12 December 2018 with the most recent update being considered by the Corporate Committee on 30 August 2022 (para 6 of the minute refers).
- 3.2 Reports to the Council on 12 May 2021 and to the Corporate Committee on 15 March 2022 expanded and adjusted the IMP programme of work. A comprehensive statement of the total programme of work now comprised within the IMP is set out in **Appendix 1** with an update on the current position for each area of work.

3.3 Key points of progress to note from the update in **Appendix 1** are:

- Smarter Working Project is on target and is completing its full business case for delivery in June 2023;
- The Depot Review continues to develop the outline business case and is working towards an update with potential early savings reporting to committee in June;
- Customer Information Hubs introduced and now operational in libraries to provide for face to face customer enquiries which will broaden service access across Moray;
- Schools for the Future has prepared 2 bids for Learning Estate Investment Programme (LEIP)³ funding, Elgin High school extension is progressing, Inveravon closure is progressing and Crossroads is mothballed;
- School Business Support project has produced a change management plan to progress service review and generate savings;
- Raising Attainment - Well-being (ASN) has an improved focus on key priorities which are progressing on target;
- Raising Attainment – Digital is working on developing proposals to improve infrastructure with input from the national Digital Office;
- In Children's Services the commissioned service for Functional Family Therapy is recruiting with a view to begin in May. The second commissioned service (restorative practice model) is completing contract details and is also due to start in May. The Integration Scheme delegating Children's Services to the Moray IJB was approved by the Scottish Government.

3.4 As noted in the report to the Corporate Committee on 30 August 2022, progress has been made on a review of project governance arrangements. A Project Management Network has been established to support and improve consistency of project management and a checklist is in place as a management tool to monitor progress.

3.5 Transform Boards have been revised to focus on programme management functions and methodology and enhancements are being made to stakeholder engagement, including elected members with member briefings having taken place on Moray Growth Deal (MGD), ASN, smarter working and the overall IMP programme.

3.6 The Council has been challenged in the Best Value Audit feedback to ensure that the pace of change is secured and maintained. As a small local authority this is particularly challenging as finite resources are stretched across broad strategic and operational remits. However, as the update at **Appendix 1** shows, there has been steady progress maintained across the programme of improvement and modernisation work. A further 3 projects have been completed: Flexible working; Governance and Customer Service, which leaves 13 active project areas and two that are on hold or progressing as resources enable. The progress indicators shows 9 of the 13 projects (70%) as green indicating that projects are progressing to plan, which is an improvement from 45% in the last report in August 2022. It is also of note that reports are coming forward to committees to seek approval for progress at key

stages for a number of workstreams, for example learning estate, school business administration and smarter working showing progress across the spectrum of the IMP.

- 3.7 In the last update to Committee it was advised that the main area considered for development of the IMP to support the future financial sustainability of the council was a rolling process of service reviews by e.g. adding a local dimension to a quality system such as the Public Sector Improvement Framework (PSIF). Although this was considered less likely to drive a cash savings agenda, the reviews could contribute to the overall focus on sustainability of services and evidence best value approaches. Given pressure on resources, it has not been possible to take this forward through the Leadership Forum as intended, however, work is progressing on the use of a quality approach to support continuous improvement.
- 3.8 Work by CMT/SMT on creating a single Project Gateway Board has been delayed as senior managers have focussed on preparing financial plans for 2023/24 and moved on to prepare for extremely challenging years ahead in financial terms. However, Transform Boards are working effectively and firmer project and programme management arrangements are evident including reporting of business cases to committee, for example in relation to the learning estate projects and so this delay has not had a material impact.
- 3.9 Engagement was also highlighted as a key influencer of project success in the August update report. Actions to develop and enhance communication and information sharing on IMP work include team briefs on the smarter working project, stakeholder involvement in the business support review and the creation of a newsletter in the ASN review implementation work.
- 3.10 As part of the Council's leadership development programme, the Corporate and Senior Management Team have participated in project management training and project management training is offered as part of the council training programme.
- 3.12 In relation to specific project work, as noted in the August 2022 report, there is a need to ensure a clear focus of the IMP investment on supporting the council to become more financially sustainable. In the last report, it was noted that the Poverty project did not bring direct cash benefits to the Council and that this work would be focussed on essential developments taking account of that. The Council has considerable savings to identify in order to address its revenue budget gap and the importance of this focus is recognised. Therefore, consideration has been given to how the aims of the poverty project could be achieved with less call on funding from reserves.
- 3.13 A report to the Corporate Committee on 8 November 2022 noted the significant range of work that is already in place across council services and working with partners to address the poverty agenda in Moray (para 14 of the minute refers). This range of action is ongoing and is monitored and reported through, for example, the children's services plan and the Local Employability Delivery plan. Therefore, there can be assurance that this important work will continue. Taking this into account, it is considered that the objectives of the poverty project can be met without a dedicated full time post and that more

limited funding could instead be utilised to address particular short term projects or priority areas of work where it would be advantageous to increase pace or progress a specific task through allocation of time limited resources. Therefore, the temporary post currently in place can be brought to an early conclusion and specific lower cost proposals made as required with a reduced call on funding.

- 3.14 It is also recognised that the Education Well-being: Pastoral Care project falls into the same category of not having cashable financial benefits as a project outcome. Therefore, similar considerations are being applied to this project area and the ECLS Committee will be asked to consider any future investment in that context.

4. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))

The Improvement and Modernisation Programme is the development of the commitment in the Corporate Plan to a programme of modernisation and improvement to contribute to a financially stable Council.

(b) Policy and Legal

None.

(c) Financial implications

This financial implications of the IMP have been approved in previous reports. The only change arising as a result of this report is the amendment to the Poverty project. It is proposed to retain a budget of £10,000 for specific short term work which will release up to £157k of the committed Transformation Reserves (£264k was original allocation for poverty).

(d) Risk Implications

The risks associated with the IMP have been reported to Committee previously and are managed through the relevant programme boards and overseen by CMT/SMT. There are no changes to the current risk profile and it is noted that progress is being made in maintaining pace which was has previously been noted as a risk. However, the risks associated with change and the success of transformation remain and will continue to be monitored

In order to manage these risks, the council will:-

- (i) Ensure that all projects meet a given standard of governance that is proportionate to the change.
- (ii) Ensure there are adequate resources for the overall programme of work and for individual projects
- (iii) Manage the dependencies and interdependencies across the scope of the change and its implications for other areas of prioritised work.

- (iv) Appoint appropriate project resources and failing which, review whether objectives are deliverable and review planned work accordingly.

(e) Staffing Implications

There continue to be challenges in securing time from stakeholders involved in a demanding workload. The post of Head of Transformation is currently vacant and there are currently no plans to activate recruitment, however, this will be reconsidered as work to develop a programme of further transformation to address the ongoing budget gap is developed.

Arrangements have been made to bring the temporary post of Senior Project Officer (Poverty) to a conclusion as of 30 April 2023, subject to Committee agreement to the revised approach.

(f) Property

No direct implications from this report, although property is the subject of one of the workstreams and the issues arising from this will be reported in due course with activity on climate change being progressed as a stand-alone programme of activity.

(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact

For the purposes of this report an Equality and a Socio Impact Assessment are not required, however it is acknowledged that various workstreams will identify change that will have an impact on equalities and socio economic considerations and will be reported in due course.

(h) Climate Change and Biodiversity Impacts

There are no immediate climate change implications directly arising from this report. However, flexible working is one of the workstreams and the issues arising from this will be reported in due course.

(i) Consultations

The Corporate and Senior Management team have been involved in the review work referred to in this report and have been consulted on the report. The comments received have been incorporated into the report and project updates.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The Committee is invited to acknowledge the progress in the projects contained in the Improvement and Modernisation Programme and the improving picture of progress across the programme of work. IMP is focussed on council priorities, particularly financial sustainability and to manage risks associated with ongoing budget position it is proposed to reduce the financial commitment to the poverty project and take this forward in a different way.**

Author of Report: Denise Whitworth, DCE ECOD
Background Papers: Reports updating on progress on Improvement and Modernisation Programme to:
12 May 2021 Full Council (Item 09 [Report](#) and Appendix [A / B / C / D / E](#))
15 September 2021 Full Council (Item 15 [Report](#) and Appendix [1 / 2 / 3](#))
15 March 2022 Corporate Committee (Item 13a [Report](#) and [Appendix](#))
30 August 2022 Corporate Committee ([Item 06 Report](#) and [Appendix](#))
Ref: SPMAN-1108985784-857 / SPMAN-1108985784-866