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**REPORT TO: EDUCATION, COMMUNITIES AND ORGANISATIONAL  
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE 23 SEPTEMBER 2020**

**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 against the projects contained within the Council's Improvement and Modernisation Programme (IMP) and to consider the issues and opportunities arising from COVID-19.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to the Education, Communities and Organisational Development Committee following a decision of Moray Council on 17 June 2020 to agree a simplified committee structure as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the case of this committee the combining of the delegated responsibilities of Children and Young People Services, Governance, Strategy and Performance, (para 9 of the minute refers).

## **2. RECOMMENDATION**

**2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:**

- (i) Notes the progress made against the projects within the IMP;**
- (ii) Notes the impact of COVID-19 on the programme delivery timescales and the opportunities arising;**
- (iii) Agrees to recommend to Full Council the extension of the post of Head of Transformation for a period of 12 months at a cost of £107K and that this be funded from Capita Receipts;**
- (iv) Notes that a further update on the IMP will be reported to the Committee in November 2020.**

## **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The Improvement and Modernisation Programme, IMP, contains 8 workstreams established to deliver transformational change within the council. The last progress report was submitted to Policy and Resources Committee on 14th January 2020. **Appendix A** provides a progress update for each of the workstreams although inevitably the programme of work has been impacted by COVID-19. As a result, and with reduced resourcing available

for projects, progress has slowed in many areas. This is particularly the case for those projects still at the definition stage but this is being addressed and business cases for transforming both ASN and Children's Services will be reported in November.

- 3.2 COVID-19 has however resulted in accelerated progress in some of the workstreams most notably flexible and mobile working. In the immediate response to COVID-19 only critical services continued to be delivered and staff encouraged to work from home where possible in accordance with government guidelines. Those delivering critical services who could not work from home operated from council offices. At the time of writing, non-essential staff have not been authorised to return to the office environment and continue to work from home where possible. As a consequence of our response to COVID-19 there has been a higher demand for home working, video conferencing and online services for both public and staff.
- 3.3 Although it is 6 months since the country went into lockdown it is still relatively early to understand the full impact of COVID-19 on our staff, members of the public and partners. The issues and opportunities are evolving but need to be embraced to avoid returning to old ways of working which may be unacceptable in a post COVID-19 environment. For example physical distancing needs to be factored into a number of areas and consideration given to the issues but also the potential opportunities it may present.
- 3.5 Heads of Service have recently reviewed the issues and opportunities for restarting their services. These have been reviewed with a number of common themes emerging. It is proposed these should be considered to deliver change associated with the general improvement and modernisation activities.
- 3.6 It is clear the existing workstreams need to be reviewed in light of COVID-19 but similarly the issues and opportunities should be factored into the immediate programme of work to maximise the transformation potential. There is a need to reset and restart the various work streams within the IMP and it is proposed to provide an updated position report to Committee in November 2020 taking into account the wider impact of COVID-19 and revised delivery plans.
- 3.7 Throughout the Council response to the situation the Head of Transformation has been assisting the Head of HR, ICT and OD by managing the ICT response to the crisis allowing the essential human resources and health and safety responses to be managed by the Head of Service. The Head of Transformation is now returning to the role as originally intended and giving consideration to restarting the various workstreams within the IMP. The post was approved for an initial period of 12 months which was scheduled to end at the start of September 2020. Having lost a number of months to the COVID-19 response and recovery it is proposed to extend the post of Head of Transformation. While 6 months have been lost it is clear from the scale and extent of change already envisaged that the council's requirement for transformation will extend beyond that time. Given the recognition of the need to create capacity for change and the contribution this role has made to the emerging progress on a number of projects, it is proposed that the Head of

Transformation post be continued for a further period of 12 months at a cost of £107K.

- 3.8 The following sections provide an overview of the areas requiring immediate actions to deliver short to medium term change in response to the issues and opportunities presented by COVID-19 and identified by Heads of Service.

### **3.9 Project Management**

- 3.9.1 At the outset of the COVID-19 crisis an Incident Management Team, IMT, was established and latterly superseded by the Response and Recovery Management Team, RRMT. These groups consisted of senior officers of the council to pull their collective thinking around the management of the crisis.
- 3.9.2 The nature of the incident and the need to react quickly to government guidance required a more agile approach to the management of the response. The initial daily meetings of the management team have been reduced over time to the pattern of weekly meetings that has now been established. These meetings have ensured that issues are escalated, actions agreed and delivered in a timely manner to meet the emerging requirements.
- 3.9.3 Out of necessity, and at extremely short notice this approach has provided direction to new ways of working being introduced including blended learning for school pupils, education hubs setup, the establishment of the Grampian Coronavirus Assistance Hub (GCAH), the introduction of a bookings solution for the recycling centres, eForms for Education and the roll out of devices for school pupils. The IMT and RRMT provided the oversight but managers were given some delegated authority to introduce changes to the benefit of the council and public.
- 3.9.4 It may be difficult to sustain this pace of change, but it is proposed that a more agile approach could be introduced for the management of projects and a framework to determine a delegated authority approach to accelerate transformational change.

### **3.10 Developing the workforce**

- 3.10.1 When the country went into lockdown, only critical services continued to be provided and a number of staff were advised to stay at home.
- 3.10.2 Initial technical problems to enable staff to connect to the council network from home have been resolved and a flexible by default approach is being implemented. All staff who can perform some or all of their role from home are being provided with a dedicated laptop to provide this level of flexibility. The roll out of technology is ongoing and further laptops have now been delivered and it is expected that any member of staff who can work from home will be able to do so by October.
- 3.10.3 Providing the flexibility for staff to work from home will protect council services from potential future lockdowns or other restrictions. However working from home for the first time has put staff in unfamiliar territory. Normally there would be a lead in or introductory period where staff could transition to the

new way of working over a period of time and more than likely for only 1 or 2 days per week. Working in isolation of colleagues can be difficult and managers have been adapting to manage a remote workforce. Those working from home have also lost the immediate call on their “go to” person in the office who would be able to help with the technical questions.

3.10.4 Physical distancing and the number of staff working from home has also created an issue for face to face meetings including those with members of the public. Although video conferencing has been available for some time it is now in high demand and critical to the ongoing operation of the council. It is also critical to ensuring the wellbeing of staff through regular keep in touch meetings.

3.10.5 Temporary solutions for video conferencing are currently available including Vscene, Google Meet and Microsoft Teams. The latest Microsoft agreement which commenced in July includes provision for MS Teams and will provide the main video conferencing solution. MS Teams however provides much more than basic video conferencing and is a full collaborative toolset providing internal and external groups with capability to share information and it is proposed the implementation of the wider MS Teams solution is included as an essential project.

3.10.6 To maximise the benefit of any further property rationalisation, home working and collaborative working is likely to be a feature of our future service delivery model and therefore it is proposed the Digital Champions programme, which was being developed prior to COVID-19, is accelerated. This will ensure the technology being introduced is promoted by the champions and they can assist others to make sure it maximises efficiencies through the improved use of technology.

### **3.11 Customer Services**

3.11.1 The Forres access point was transferred from Auchernack House to Forres House in December 2019 and in the process the nature of the service changed to a more self-service approach. The intention was for this change in service provision to be a pre-cursor to the development of this approach across all access points.

3.11.2 As a consequence of the lockdown all 4 access points in Buckie, Elgin, Forres and Keith were closed and have not re-opened. There is uncertainty around the public reaction to visiting access points but the general demand and uptake of online services during the pandemic has presented an opportunity to review the future of services provided by access points which should be incorporated into the general reporting of improvements.

3.11.3 The contact centre provides a number of services on behalf of other service areas of the council. In light of the crisis, the potential for further lockdowns or similar restrictions, social distancing within offices requiring staff to work from home as part of a rota and general improvements, services have identified the potential to transfer additional functions to the contact centre. Typically these services include some functions within education, transportation, waste and also a potential local delivery of the current Grampian wide CAH.

3.11.4 The contact centre staff can also now provide the service from home offering the additional opportunity to ensure access to the contact centre is available to members of the public at a time that is possibly more convenient to them and the services they are requesting. Therefore, the planned work to explore options for the expansion of the contact centre to other services and potential efficiencies arising from that will progress through the Transforming Council Board.

### **3.12 Digital/Online Services**

3.12.1 A shift to online services has been a target for some time, initially with the Digital Services project and latterly the IMP. During the lockdown period there has been a general increase in the number of services available online with several eForms developed in response to the evolving needs of the council and an online bookings solution procured and implemented for booking appointments at the recycling centres. The uptake of online services has increased over the last period. Libraries have close to a 50% increased uptake of their eAudio and eBook services when compared to the same period last year and likewise the brown bin permits have risen from 73% online in 2019 to 82% in 2020. Appointments for the recycling centres using the online bookings solution has taken over 12,500 bookings since it was implemented for the re-opening of recycling centres on 1 June 2020.

3.12.2 The issues and opportunities identified by Heads of Service highlight the opportunity to embrace and accelerate this shift to digital/online services and lower transaction costs which, using the SOCITM figures quoted in previous report to Policy and Resources Committee in relation to Digital Services on 14 April 2015, suggest online transactions are 50 times more cost effective than face-to-face and 20 times cheaper than a telephone call.

3.12.3 The opportunities include a number of online services primarily around the use of bookings, eForms and online payments. With the exception of the bookings solution which incurs a £500 configuration fee for each additional category of booking introduced, the core tools are available for the development of these solutions avoiding the need for further procurement exercises to introduce new solutions. Further investigation will be undertaken over the next period to determine the more detailed requirements and the extent of the workload.

3.12.4 Any shift to online services should be considered alongside a general review of processes. Throughout the COVID-19 response a number of changes have been made to avoid the need for visiting offices, undertaking home visits, signing forms, sharing equipment, an increased sharing of data and generally a more open mindset to how services could be delivered. A planned lean process workshop to pilot a process review had to be postponed due to lockdown and it is proposed to reschedule this as soon as possible. COVID-19 has arguably influenced the appetite and culture for change within the council and a lean based approach to service re-design will provide the basis for the identification of new ways of working. This will also provide service staff with the methodology/skills to undertake their own process reviews.

3.13 It is proposed to review the IMP workstreams and report back to Committee in November 2020. The issues and opportunities identified by Heads of Service will be used to progress general efficiency outlined above and in the following areas

- (i) Review project management arrangements.
- (ii) Develop the workforce.
- (iii) Review the issues and opportunities for Customer Services.
- (iv) Introduce a lean process review to maximise opportunities for online services.

#### 4. **SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

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

The IMP 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:**

The following provides the breakdown of the known financial position with regard to the IMP in the current financial year:

	£'000s
Expenditure to July 2020	108
Forecast additional expenditure to March 2021	195*
Total estimated expenditure 2020/21	<u>303</u>

(\*includes estimated cost of £107K to continue with Head of Transformation post)

The IMP is currently estimated to deliver between £672K - £732K of annual recurring savings and £250K one off receipts but this will need to be reviewed with the impact of COVID-19.

**(d) Risk Implications:** There is a considerable risk that the delayed progress in some of the projects of the IMP will have an impact on the Council's future financial position. However, there is a need to understand how each of the individual work streams of IMP must be altered as a result of the impact of COVID-19. At this time there is an additional risk of not tackling the opportunities for early transformation that are presented as a result of COVID-19.

It is important that the programme of transformation is adequately resourced to ensure capacity and capability to develop and deliver change. This will be considered as each project is developed, however, at this stage the post of Head of Transformation is vital to the development and management of the programme of change. In the

absence of this dedicated resource there is a high risk that progress would be considerably slower and less robust in terms of governance, quality and prospect of success.

- (e) **Staffing Implications:** There are specific staffing considerations related to the various projects and these are being addressed as projects are considered and initiated. Cost implications are built into the business case for each project to ensure an appropriate return on investment.

As set out in 3.7 above it is proposed to extend the Head of Transformation post for a period of 12 months. This will enable the development of the solutions identified within the recovery plans and to provide overarching management of the delivery of the IMP.

- (f) **Property:** No direct implications from this report, although property is the subject of one of the work streams and the issues arising from this will be reported in due course.

- (g) **Equalities/Socio Economic Impact:** None

- (h) **Consultations:**

The corporate and senior management teams have been consulted in the preparation of this report and comments incorporated to co-ordinate the project updates for their areas of responsibility.

## 5. **CONCLUSION**

- 5.1 **The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about unprecedented disruption to our business but it is important to reflect on the current situation and any lessons to be learned, issues and opportunities arising from this crisis to understand how the IMP may need to be adapted to take account of these factors. The ensuing behaviour of the public and staff is unknown and ultimately behaviours and tolerances may determine how some of our public services such as access points, libraries and leisure services can be returned.**
- 5.2 **While the situation has somewhat stabilised since the Government announced the lockdown on 23rd March 2020 there remains a large degree of uncertainty surrounding the specifics of any exit strategy and what impact this may have on council services, staff employed by the council, members of the public and suppliers of goods and services to the council.**
- 5.3 **The IMP needs to be reviewed taking into account the known factors arising from COVID-19 but some early transformational opportunities are being presented which should be progressed as soon as possible.**

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Background Papers:

Ref:

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