

EPPING FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

NOTES OF A MEETING OF TRANSFORMATION TASK AND FINISH PANEL HELD ON TUESDAY, 1 AUGUST 2017 IN COMMITTEE ROOM 1, CIVIC OFFICES, HIGH STREET, EPPING FROM 7.30 - 9.45 PM

Members Present:	Councillors A Patel (Chairman), S Kane (Vice-Chairman), N Avey, N Bedford, R Brookes, K Chana, D Dorrell, S Heap, L Hughes, M Sartin, B Surtees, H Whitbread
Other members present:	Councillors J Lea, C Whitbread
Apologies for Absence:	Councillors R Baldwin, R Bassett
Officers Present	D Bailey (Head of Transformation), S Hill (Assistant Director (Governance)), P Maddock (Assistant Director (Accountancy)), O Shaw (Head of Customer Service), S Tautz (Democratic Services Manager)

6. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (COUNCIL MINUTE 39 - 23.7.02)

The Director of Governance reported that Councillor J. Lea was substituting for Councillor R. Bassett at the meeting.

7. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made in connection with any item in the agenda for the meeting, pursuant to the Council's Code of Member Conduct.

8. NOTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (29.6.17)

The notes of the meeting of the Task and Finish Panel held on 29 June 2017 were agreed as a correct record; subject to the following:

- (a) the replacement of the reference to 'contractors' (Page 2) with 'consultants'; and
- (b) the replacement of references to 'Human Resources' and 'HR' (Q2, Page 7) with 'officers of the Council'.

9. TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME - PROJECT LIFECYCLE

The Task and Finish Panel reviewed the various stages of the 'lifecycle' of projects and initiatives included within the scope of the Council's Transformation Programme. Although the Panel reviewed the project lifecycle with specific reference to the recently completed Printer Migration Project (P033) as an example of a transformation initiative, members were reminded that proposals for the development of transformation projects could be derived from many sources, including the Corporate Plan and service business plans of the authority. The Head of Transformation reported that, although there was currently no specific member role in the development of transformation projects, member suggestions for appropriate initiatives would be considered as part of the Council's adopted procedures for project consideration.

The Head of Transformation outlined the lifecycle for transformation projects, which defined the inter-related phases of the project and provided a structure for governing the progression of the initiative through the establishment of a Transformation Programme Board to oversee each phase and provide a mechanism for project approvals. Members noted that each adopted transformation project was designed to deliver specific objectives in the form of outputs, outcomes or benefits and that the lifecycle illustrated the distinct phases of a project that took an initial idea, developed it into detailed objectives and delivered those objectives. The Task and Finish Panel was advised that no particular priority was currently awarded to individual transformation projects, although the Transformation Programme Board was keen to implement such a process going forward.

Members were advised that the 'Charter' stage of the lifecycle established the vision and outline business case for each project. The project charter set out the expected benefits of each initiative through analysis of the viability of the proposal and consideration of whether investment of resources should proceed to the next (Project Initiation) stage, through a process of 'discovery' supported by the Transformation Team. The Head of Transformation reported that the project charter, which was developed by a nominated Project Manager, also identified the scope of the specific project, the timescale for its intended completion (if progressed) and the members of the relevant project team, including a nominated Project Sponsor from within the membership of the Transformation Programme Board.

The Task and Finish Panel noted that, at the 'Project Initiation' stage of the lifecycle, the project was fully defined into a detailed specification and business case in order that the Transformation Programme Board could make an informed decision as to whether the project should proceed further to the project delivery stage. The Head of Transformation reported that Project Initiation Document also provided a detailed plan for the delivery of the project, including relevant resource considerations and the impact of relationships with other projects and initiatives, and that the document was utilised to measure the success of the project at the completion stage. Members noted that the timescale and key activities of each project were kept under review by the Project Team and Transformation Programme Board, and that timescales were adjusted as necessary to reflect factors that would influence the progress of a project.

Members were advised that, as the delivery of a project was progressed and outputs were achieved, an ongoing process of benefits realisation ensured that benefits arising from transformation activity were measured and compared to the baseline position identified in the Project Initiation Document. The Head of Transformation reported that this element of the project lifecycle ensured that new ways of working became embedded in the 'business-as-usual' arrangements of the authority.

The Task and Finish Panel was advised that, although the final stage of the project lifecycle related to the 'Closure' of a project, it was likely that the realisation of benefits would often continue after the closure of the project. The Head of Transformation indicated that some residual support would often be required to ensure that ongoing benefits identified by the business case, were realised.

The Task and Finish Panel considered that it might appropriate going forward, for the select committees to have a specific role for the review of project closure reports and that this might therefore form part of its recommendations to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Members also considered that, in holding the Transformation Programme to account, it would be helpful for all members of the select committees to receive training on the various elements of the project lifecycle

10. TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME - RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The Task and Finish Panel considered the risk management strategy for the Transformation Programme, which had recently been agreed by the Transformation Programme Board. Members noted that the strategy set out the Council's approach to the identification, management and mitigation of risks associated with individual projects and initiatives within the scope of the programme.

The Head of Transformation reported that the strategy was based on the authority's existing approach to risk management and its corporate Risk Management Strategy. Members were advised that the risks arising from individual projects and initiatives were considered by the Transformation Programme Board as part of the 'Charter' and 'Project Initiation' stages of the lifecycle of each project, alongside the identification of risks related to associated projects.

11. TRANSFORMATION PROJECTS - RISK POTENTIAL ASSESSMENT

The Head of Transformation presented the methodology adopted by the Council for the assessment of the strategic risk 'potential' of transformation projects and initiatives, which had been agreed by the Transformation Programme Board, with specific reference to the recently completed Printer Migration Project (P033).

The Task and Finish Panel was advised that the Risk Potential Assessment was an indicator of the risk potential of specific projects and initiatives and was not intended to be an exhaustive risk analysis. Members noted however, that the assessment was designed to be the starting point for a more complete risk assessment of a project and was therefore undertaken early in the lifecycle of a project, during service discovery and the 'Charter' phase.

The Head of Transformation reported that the assessment also helped to identify projects that should be supported and included within the scope of the Transformation Programme and that the assessment was reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis, as part of the implementation and delivery of projects and initiatives.

12. COVALENT PROJECT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM - DEMONSTRATION

The Head of Transformation made a presentation of the functionality of the 'Covalent' performance and risk management software that had recently been purchased by the Council following an assessment of the different systems currently available.

The Task and Finish Panel was advised that the Covalent system had been considered the most appropriate to support the delivery of the Transformation Programme, through the monitoring of targets, objectives and other critical success factors. Members noted the following benefits of the Covalent system:

- progress and performance information brought together within a single system;
- easy updating of progress and performance in response to email notification, removing the need for previous time consuming paper-based systems;
- clear identification of slippage against targets and timescales;
- easy report generation, also removing the need for previous time consuming paper based systems;
- opportunities for action to be escalated if information not input within specified timescales; and
- timely and readily accessible information available to managers and officers.

The Task and Finish Panel noted that the Covalent system was cloud-based and that ownership of the data that it contained was held by the Council. Some members expressed concern that the system had only been purchased on a twelve-month licence arrangement, although it was accepted that such arrangement was commonplace in the software market.

The Task and Finish Panel was advised that, going forward, performance monitoring of the Council's key performance indicators was to be added to the functionality of the system. Members noted that investigation was also being made of the potential for progress monitoring of the new Corporate Plan and the corporate Risk Register to be added to the system.

The Head of Transformation reported that member access to the Covalent system could be implemented by way of appropriate access credentials and that rollout of system access to members might therefore form part of the recommendations of the Task and Finish Panel to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

13. TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME - OVERVIEW OF HIGH-LEVEL PROJECTS

The Task and Finish Panel considered arrangements for the scrutiny of projects and initiatives within the scope of the Transformation Programme that concerned matters that were the service responsibility of the Office of the Chief Executive, for which no select committee existed within the current overview and scrutiny framework.

Members considered that it would be appropriate for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to undertake the scrutiny of projects and initiatives that concerned matters that were the service responsibility of the Chief Executive and that this approach might therefore form part of the recommendations to be made to the Committee by the Task and Finish Panel.

14. ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING

The Task and Finish Panel agreed that the following matters be included in the agenda for its next meeting:

- (a) arrangements for consideration of the progress of projects and initiatives within the scope of the Transformation Programme by the select committees in order to add value to individual projects, possibly on an 'exception' basis;
- (b) the trigger points for such exception reporting;
- (c) the recovery strategy for the 'Covalent' system to be implemented in the event of the withdrawal of support for the system;
- (d) details of the on-costs accruing to individual projects and initiatives within the scope of the Transformation Programme;
- (e) the identification of the recommendations of the Task and Finish Panel to be made to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, possibly including the following:
 - (i) arrangements for the select committees to review appropriate project closure reports (Note 9);
 - (ii) arrangements for all members of the select committees to receive training on the various elements of the project lifecycle (Note 9);
 - (iii) the rollout of member access to the Covalent system (Note 12); and
 - (iv) arrangements for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to undertake appropriate scrutiny of projects and initiatives that concern matters within the service responsibility of the Office of the Chief Executive (Note 13).

15. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Task and Finish Panel be held at 7.30pm on 11 September 2017.

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