

## **REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, WORKFORCE & DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION**

### **1. Decisions**

As per the Financial Regulations governance process, the following direct contract award decisions (£100,000+) have been made this Financial Year for reasons of prudence:

- Property change of use works – x2 Children’s Residential Facilities (August '24);
- Relocate Cullompton cricket facility - Cullompton Eastern Town Centre relief road (August '24);
- Kenton flood relief works - urgent improvements following retaining wall collapse (June '24);
- Meldon viaduct - timber deck replacement, health and safety imperative (July '24);
- Afghan citizen resettlement scheme – Government relocation support (May '24).

### **2. Performance and Partnerships**

Progress against the Council’s Corporate Plan 2023/24 was reported to Cabinet in July updating on the governance and performance review, financial sustainability, People Strategy, IT replacement systems, equality and diversity and devolution. A Corporate Plan for 2024/25 was approved with six priority areas of focus spanning: working in partnership to secure better outcomes for children, developing an investment plan for our road network, embedding a corporate performance framework and culture of continuous improvement, delivering a change an improvement programme including modernising through digital solutions, working with citizens with a focus on highways and transport and building relationships with partners to improve targeted community services. Cabinet also approved improvement areas for all directorates and the publication of an annual report.

A Corporate Performance framework has been endorsed and an initial set of headline indicators has been approved to measure and benchmark the council’s performance in delivering its Strategic Plan 2021-2025, annual Corporate Plan and Directorate improvement priorities. Quarterly performance reports showing progress will be coming to Cabinet starting in November and work has started on creating an interactive dashboard that will be publicly available. Cabinet.

An internal data and intelligence review has been completed and the findings used to support the development of the County Council’s performance function, performance framework and reporting. Learning from other local authorities, such as Wiltshire Council and Dorset Council has also been taken on board and these conversations continue. Data intelligence, management and information staff across the Council are transferring into the new Performance and Partnerships Directorate to provide organisational capacity and establish stronger links between service areas, to share expertise and learning, and to help improve our performance and pace of delivery.

A significant number of the Council's priorities are delivered in partnership with a range of organisations. There is a shared responsibility to measure and assess performance and collective delivery and achievement of outcomes. Having appropriate performance arrangements and governance in place is important and work is underway to establish a partnership framework approach as aligned to financial regulations as part of the Council's governance review.

### **3. People Strategy**

Cabinet approved the new People Strategy for the Authority in June 2023 and the associated Action Plan in September 2023 which was identified as one of the key priorities for DCC in 2023/24 in response to a number of issues.

A key priority for the People Strategy is also to outline how we will ensure that we have the appropriately skilled and talented people we need to deliver services to our communities and ensure that our Council is fit for the future, in a highly competitive market. Further to this, we want all staff to understand and embody the importance of quality relationships, along with our responsibility to strive for better outcomes and good value for the people of Devon.

The Action Plan outlined how we will focus on delivery of this over the next 3 years and this report provides a summary of the progress to date.

The Strategy focuses on 6 key themes of staff experience within Devon County Council:

1. Voice
2. Recruitment
3. Reward
4. Wellbeing
5. Belonging
6. Learning

The 6 themes were shaped by feedback from previous staff surveys, findings from the Race Equality Audit, benchmarking against other organisations, research of the recruitment market, themes identified through 'Exit Interviews' with staff leaving the Authority and feedback from staff reference groups.

The themes were consulted on and benchmarked through a range of methods, ahead of being presented to Cabinet in June 2023. The associated Action Plan provides the overarching aims within each theme and details the actions identified as required to achieve these. It is envisaged that the activities undertaken in relation to each theme will provide a clear framework to support improved performance and culture change across our workforce.

In terms of recent progress against the work outlined in the action plan, the team are pleased to report that:

**Voice:**

The Corporate Engagement Strategy was approved and shared with the workforce, emphasising the focus on transparent communication and clarity when informing and consulting. It also outlines a structured approach to engagement activities throughout the year.

The engagement survey has closed with an excellent response rate of 51% response rate compared to 32% from the previous survey, undertaken in 2022. Work has started to develop localised action plans linked to workforce planning for each directorate which will identify the specific workforce challenges within each directorate and develop a longer term, planned approach to address them.

**Recruitment:**

Children's Services has been the primary focus for this area due to the acute recruitment & retention issues in the area. Subsequently a Recruitment & Retention Strategy for the Children's and Young Peoples Futures directorate has been co-produced and approved, with priorities now being progressed.

In addition an Employer Value Proposition and recruitment brand have been developed, both corporately and with a distinct brand for social care. The "Do it for Devon" concept will launch soon, aiming to support DCC in being an employer of choice.

**Reward:**

The Vivup benefits platform has launched, offering lifestyle discounts and salary sacrifice schemes for our workforce, in addition to significant savings for the Authority. This includes an annual leave purchase scheme. To date over 3,800 staff have registered for the platform. A framework for formal and informal recognition of achievements is also being developed and will come before SLT in the Autumn.

**Wellbeing:**

Initiatives include review, updates to and the relaunch of the 1:1 and appraisal processes, procurement of a new Employee Assistance Programme implemented recently, in addition to a new Occupational Health provider from October 2024 to enhance employee wellbeing through a more proactive and holistic service offer.

**Belonging:**

A review of staff forums and their constitutions has been completed, with new terms of reference approved and ready for implementation. Ongoing work will be to support the identified staff groups to ensure positive outcomes and governance through regular updates to the appropriate programme boards.

**Learning:**

A draft Corporate Learning Strategy is now under review with the focus of creating a learning culture at all levels within the Authority. Workforce planning is also underway across all directorates, supported by the Link Business Partner team within People & Culture. This will then enable the design and development of meaningful and visible career pathway which aim to aid staff retention. The Senior Leadership Team has undertaken both 'Outward Mindsets' and Insights development over the past year, with the latter currently being rolled out to the Extended Leadership team.

### **Care Leavers:**

In addition to the work outlined, the People Strategy also contains specific actions that target improvement of the experience of Care Leavers within Devon.

As all of the themes have been allocated an SLT sponsor to ensure this work is supported and championed, the same has been done for Care Leavers, with the Director for Performance and Partnerships taking on this role.

In addition to the work supporting the People Strategy, the People & Culture Directorate are supporting multiple restructures and TUPE transfers across the authority.

## **4. Digital Transformation**

### **Cyber Security:**

DCC have been successful in being selected to work with 'Local Digital', (part of MHCLG) on a pilot Cyber Assessment Framework (CAF) to support Council's assess their resilience.

To enhance DCCs resilience an Extended Detection & Response service has been implemented to enhance the coverage of our cyber services. DCC have a 24/7 monitoring support service (Cyber Security Operations Centre) in place to ensure optimisation of security controls and protections to enable earlier detection of cyber attacks.

In July, DCC were successful in the renewal of our annual PSN (Public Services Network) certification. The PSN is the government's high-performance network, which helps public sector organisations work together, reduce duplication and share resources. For DCC to access this, which is needed for us to deliver some of our services, we need to make sure we are compliant with the necessary standards. Compliance is assessed and certified by the Central Digital and Data Office.

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### **Key project areas:**

SEND Statutory Team: developing additional functionality for the SATURN system that went live in April 2024. The system is helping to make processes more efficient, automate manual tasks and improve communication with parents and carers.

Development of Member Portal: To assist Members raise, manage and respond to casework, requiring the input of DCC officers; and enable the Council to monitor and improve the quality and timeliness of responses Members receive.

Future Finance Project: supporting the implementation of an interface hub that creates links between various line of business systems and the new system (Unit 4) including the development of a new payment gateway.

Joint Adults and Children's system (JACS) replacement: The invitation to tender has now been launched for system suppliers to respond to.

#### **Device roll out:**

The project is on track to complete by August 2025, ahead of Windows 10's end of support in October 2025. The project will replace 5,800 laptops; 2,000 of which have already been rolled out to staff.

#### **Use of technology:**

The Digital and Technology Service launched a trial of Microsoft AI (CoPilot) tools with over 300 staff from across the organisation . This work will help us to understand the opportunities that generative AI can bring to the organisation, informing governance and security requirements of these fast emerging technologies.

Copilot is currently being used to generate minutes and action points for a range of meetings including Child Protection Conferences, MASH Strategy Meetings and Legal Planning Meetings. It will lead to improved consistency in style, format, and quality, providing a uniform approach to documenting meetings.

### **5. Procurement services**

The UK's new Procurement Act comes into effect from 28<sup>th</sup> October 2024 following new legislation. The Council's existing Procurement Strategy is consistent with the essence of the new Procurement Act, which is being built into the Council's operating procedures. The Procurement Act promotes good practices including themes such as early market engagement, transparency and driving supplier performance, as well as promoting local economic development, innovation, Social Value and overall value for money. The Council will be undertaking 'Meet The Buyer' market engagement events in the Autumn and promoting these themes.

The Procurement service is working collaboratively organisation wide and with Partners to support strategic priorities, financial prudence / value for money and public good. Procurement services supports all Directorates with their external procurement / commissioning programme and helps underpin organisational requirements from early Delivery Model appraisal through to external procurement and commissioning programme and onward performance management support.

### **6. Legal and Democratic Services – Governance Working Group**

Work continues on the Member-led Governance Working Group. Changes have been made to the Council's Constitution in relation to Financial Regulations, Key Decisions, Policy Framework, Decision making (Delegated Member decisions and more recently Officer Decisions – due to be considered on the agenda today).

A full review of the Council's Committee Structure has been undertaken, with the revisions being endorsed at the Council's AGM in May 2024, aimed at streamlining processes and ensuring structures were fit for purpose.

The group is still meeting regularly to review, consider, benchmark and make improvements in areas such as member engagement; consultation and other decision making protocols – improving the approach the authority has to engaging with residents to ensure this is satisfactorily included in the decision-making processes and corporate governance.

The Council's constitution now includes a local member protocol – 'Think Local Councillor'. This encourages officers to 'think local councillor' to strengthen current processes and ensure local members are engaged, but work is ongoing to ensure this is embedded across the organisation, with training planned at a number of manager days in September and October.

Amendments to public participation were made to reflect modern meetings and working practices. Members of the public are now able to attend some meetings virtually.

The agenda and reports are available on the members SharePoint site as well as an action tracker which shows progress to date.

The current focus of the group is the officer scheme of delegation, Member complaints process, consultations, partnership framework and oversight, with the Member Development Steering Group, of Member Development in Induction planning.

Councillor Andrew Saywell  
Cabinet Member for Organisational Development, Workforce  
& Digital Transformation