Report of the Corporate Infrastructure and Regulatory Services Scrutiny Committee: Future Finance Project Standing Overview Group Meeting of 16 January 2025

Report of the Director of Legal and Democratic Services

Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Committee before taking effect.

1) Recommendation

That the Committee be asked to:

1) accept this report as an accurate record of the meeting ensuring transparency in Scrutiny activities.
2) arrange a further meeting of the Future Finance Standing Overview Group.

2) Background / Introduction

Standing Overview Group meetings of the Corporate Infrastructure and Regulatory Services Scrutiny Committee are held with the purpose of bringing rigour and understanding to complex issues across different services. To promote transparency, a Report is brought to the Scrutiny Committee to highlight pertinent issues and take forward any actions or recommendations that have arisen.

Any action points arising from the sessions are reported back to the next formal Committee meeting.

This Report outlines the topics covered at the 16 January 2025 meeting of Future Finance Standing Overview Group, and highlights the key points raised during the discussion and details any agreed actions and/or recommendations.

The Future Finance Project is the Council's transformation programme to move to a new corporate finance system. The Corporate Infrastructure and Regulatory Services Committee resolved, in 2023, to hold a Standing Overview Group to review the Future Finance Project following a spotlight review entitled Modernisation of the Corporate Finance System . The scope of the spotlight review was "to evaluate the Future Finance Project's aims, plans and risks to determine if the approach aligns to our corporate priorities and best value. In particular, focusing on quality, governance, and budget." This is the fifth meeting of the Future Finance Standing Overview Group.

3) Main Body

Update Since November 2024

The Standing Overview Group received a presentation by the Head of Finance Transformation and Head of Financial Systems and Processes.

Core user acceptance testing has been completed and the team are satisfied that the functionality of the core system is working as expected.

Training resources have been developed and have been rolled out to relevant officers. Throughout the autumn a series of Manager Days were held, during these sessions time was allocated to the Future Finance Project Training raising awareness of the importance of the training. Training reminders are sent to officers.

A critical component of the project, underway since October 2024 is the integration of line of business systems with the core system. Line of business systems include CareFirst, iWays, Eclipse etc. Each system is critical to service delivery and will send information to Unit 4. The integrations of line of business systems presented both technical and user challenges, the majority of which have been worked through with those outstanding being actively worked on. These challenges must be remedied in advance of a move to the final stage of the project.

An area of success is the planned implementation of the income management system. User acceptance testing took place late 2024 and was well received and is being implemented earlier than planned.

Daily Gold Command meetings take place with the project sponsors; Director of Finance and Public Value, and Director of Transformation and Business Services to continue work at pace and where necessary unblock challenges.

Devon Assurance Partnership have been engaged throughout to support the management of risks.

The system is not static and can continue to grow and develop over time.

Summary of Member Discussion:

Members of the Corporate Infrastructure and Regulatory Services Committee were invited, via this Standing Overview Group, to ask questions about and offer comments on the project. The key aspects of the Report and Member discussion are covered below.

- *The cost of implementation*: As per previous updates the contingency fund is being used. The project manager is satisfied that the remaining budget is sufficient for the remainder of the project. Members stressed the importance of remaining within budget.
- *Integrated System Testing*: Following information about the integration of line of business systems with the core system, Members asked for assurance that should the Council bring online new line of business systems that they would be able to fully integrate with Unit 4 for which assurance was provided. Embridge, the

implementation consultants, are fully engaged in the development of the design and development of the interface hub to also ensure if it fit for purpose and future proofed.

- *Project Go Live*: The project continues to discuss an exact go live date. Members heard of the progress being made at pace.
- *Future Standing Overview Group Session:* Members discussed a further session of the Standing Overview Group near to/ just after Go Live. This would include a demonstration of the system.
- *Member Induction:* Members asked that as part of Member Induction programme information be provided on the systems in use across the Council with an outline of their purpose, including Unit 4.
- *Future of the system:* Will be able to develop and improve the system over time to continue to improve efficiency and effectiveness of the system.

Members welcomed the progress made by the team, and thanked officers for their attendance and updates. Members asked for a future meeting of the Standing Overview Group after the Future Finance systems goes lives, with a focus on what worked well and lessons learned. Members would also welcome examples of training videos and to hear about the feedback from user acceptance training.

4) Options / Alternatives

The report is the summary of a Scrutiny Standing Overview Group meeting. Scrutiny does not make decisions and this report does not propose any alternatives.

5) Consultations / Representations / Technical Data

As above, there are no specific considerations in regard to consultations, representations and technical data in this report.

6) Strategic Plan

The alignment of all Scrutiny activity with the strategic plan is detailed on the Scrutiny work programme. The issues raised in the report and the benefit of developing member knowledge and the 'critical friend' challenge of Scrutiny contributes to the Council achieving its strategic plan.

Improving Member knowledge on key issues contributes to the Council's commitment to being a trusted, inclusive and innovative Council. It ensures good decision making and that the Council listens and learns.

7) Financial Considerations

There are no specific financial considerations in this report.

8) Legal Considerations

There are no specific financial considerations in this report.

9) Environmental Impact Considerations (Including Climate Change, Sustainability and Socio-economic)

There are no specific environmental impact considerations in this report.

10)   Equality Considerations

There are no specific equality considerations in this report.

11)   Risk Management Considerations

The activity of Scrutiny Standing Overview Groups contributes to the mitigations for:
- Ineffective Member Scrutiny defined as: 'Due to ineffective scrutiny, the level and quality of service management may drop, leading to financial mismanagement or harm to staff and/or citizens and reputational damage e.g. Grenfell.

- Member Effectiveness defined as: 'Inadequate member effectiveness due to a lack of training, support and knowledge leads to a lack of challenge to corporate officers and/or poor decision making, resulting in a negative effect on the County's citizens (poor value for money, poor service delivery, harm, etc).'

12)   Summary / Conclusions / Reasons for Recommendations

The Report outlines the topics covered at the meeting of 16 January 2025 highlights the key points raised during discussion and details any agreed actions.

The Report is formally reported to the Corporate Infrastructure and Regulatory Services Committee in the interests of openness, transparency and good decision making.

Attendance

Councillors: J, Berry, A Dewhirst, M, Squires, C Slade, J Trail

Head of Finance Transformation: Jenny Ryding
Head of Financial Systems and Processes: Daniel Harris
Head of Scrutiny: Louise Rayment

The meeting began at 14:00 and finished at 14:28

Name Director of Legal and Democratic Services: Maria Price
Electoral Divisions: All

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

Local Government Act 1972: List of background papers

Background Paper: Nil
Date

File Reference

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