

**AGENDA ITEM**

**REPORT TO CABINET**

**DATE: 18 JANUARY 2024**

**REPORT OF THE CORPORATE  
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

**CABINET DECISION**

**Portfolio Title – Leader of the Council, Councillor Bob Cook**

**Powering Our Future – Programme Update**

**SUMMARY**

This report provides an update on the Powering Our Future Programme. It includes:

- Draft Mission Statement and Council Missions for Cabinet approval
- Communities Powering Our Future
  - Building intelligence and insight to inform our future approach to community development
- Partnerships Powering Our Future
  - Developing a 'Team Stockton' approach with our partners
- Transformation Powering Our Future
  - Details of scope for Phase 1 reviews, for Cabinet approval
- Our Colleagues Powering Our Future
  - Employee Survey results informing our Workforce Development Strategy
  - Smart Working Policy for Cabinet approval
- Regeneration Powering Our Future
  - Driving economic growth to increase prosperity and wellbeing in communities.

**REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)/DECISION(S)**

Cabinet is recommended to agree the Powering Our Future approach to ensure that the Council has a clear plan to address the financial challenges we face, at the same time as improving outcomes for communities, including:

- Creation of opportunities to build brighter futures for our communities and reduce inequality, using the limited amount of money we have available.
- Carefully managing our resources, creating a new relationship with communities, while providing efficient services that are valued by our residents.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Cabinet is recommended to:

- Agree the draft Mission Statement and Council Missions set out at Sections 2 & 3
- Agree the approach to Communities Powering Our Future, set out at Section 4
- Agree the areas of focus for Team Stockton, set out at Section 5
- Agree in principle the scope of Phase 1 Transformation reviews set out at Section 6. It is recommended that the Powering Our Future Programme Board has responsibility to agree the final scope, based on the outcome of the rapid review (detailed in Section 6) and consideration of full Project Initiation Documents.
- Note the findings from the Employee Survey, and agree the priority work strands for the Workforce Development Strategy (Section 7)

- Agree the Smart Working Policy set out at Section 7 and attached at appendix 1
- Note the areas of focus for Regeneration Powering Our Future (Section 8) and agree to receive future updates on individual areas of activity.

## 1. Introduction

Powering Our Future sets a new strategic framework for the Council, initially agreed by Cabinet in July 2023. Since July, work has taken place to develop and refine the focus of the programme, to ensure it addresses the challenges and opportunities we have as a Borough.

The conditions we are working in have changed. We know we are a strong council, however what we have done to get here, won't get us to where we need to be in future. Like most public sector organisations our finances are under significant pressure, as set out in the Medium Term Financial Plan report to Cabinet in December 2023.

We must think differently and creatively about how we respond to the challenges ahead as we strive to achieve the best for our Borough, while we carefully manage the money we have available.

Although we can no longer afford to meet the needs of our residents in the way we have in the past, we are confident we can work with our partners and communities to put in place new and innovative approaches that will not only save money, but also reshape what we do, in the best interests of our residents – we will do this through our Powering Our Future Programme.

## 2. Council Mission Statement

It is proposed that the Council sets a new Mission Statement to Power Our Future. Our Mission Statement sets out a picture of success for the council. It is underpinned by 5 Missions, focused on how we will achieve success.

Our draft Mission Statement, for Cabinet approval is: *We will be a bold, brave and innovative Council. Together with our partners we will make sure Stockton-on-Tees is a fair and equal place, where everyone is proud to live and work, where our communities flourish and people feel they belong. We want everyone in our Borough to participate in building a brighter future for all of us.*

## 3. Council Missions

Communities Powering Our Future – changing our relationship with communities to make sure our residents have happy healthy lives

- We need to change the way we work with our communities, to use their knowledge, skills and strengths to help them deliver positive outcomes for themselves. Not only will this save money, it will mean that our residents are healthy, happy and feel like they belong.
- We will empower communities and increase individual, family and community level activities, helping people and communities to be independent and have less reliance on Council services.

Partnerships Powering Our Future – stronger together

- By working with partner organisations we can make sure our residents have support when they need it and that Stockton-on-Tees provides opportunities which make it a great place to live, work and play.

Transformation Powering Our Future – new and innovative ways of working that are better for communities and more efficient

- Our ambitious and entrepreneurial spirit will make sure our residents have bright futures. We will work with our partners and communities in new ways, embracing technology and new ways of working to create opportunities and reduce inequality, using the limited amount of money we have available.
- We will continue to carefully manage our resources. We will focus on creating a new relationship with communities, while providing efficient services that offer value for money and are valued by our residents.

Colleagues Powering Our Future – empowering our colleagues to do the best they can for communities

- Our talented workforce will step up to the challenging budget situation by using their knowledge and skills to work with our partners and communities in innovative, adaptable and dynamic ways with the best interests of our residents being the focus of everything they do.

Regeneration Powering Our Future – driving economic growth to improve community prosperity and wellbeing.

- Our exciting regeneration projects will make sure Stockton-on-Tees is a place of choice for business. Not only will this generate more income through Council Tax and Business Rates, there will be more employment opportunities too, which will reduce demand on services, saving us money.
- Our Borough will be recognised for its thriving economy at the heart of Tees Valley and as a place where everyone has the opportunity to succeed.

The remainder of this report provides an update on activity for each of the Missions.

#### **4. Communities Powering Our Future**

Initial work has focused on developing baseline information to better understand our communities. This includes data analysis, a resident's survey and a conversation with communities, based on the Office for National Statistics (ONS), National Wellbeing Measures and four open questions:

- What is good about the place you live?
- What would make it better?
- What could you do where you live to make it better?
- What do you need help with to make it better?

There have been around 1400 responses to the Residents Survey to date.

This will build an understanding of our communities that will be explored further using an Appreciative Inquiry Approach. Appreciative Inquiry is a participative learning approach. It focuses on community strengths and 'what works', which will be used to inform a future Vision for the Borough that is developed with, and jointly owned by communities.

In parallel to this, officers are reviewing existing activity delivered by the Council. We are gathering insight and intelligence of our current commissioned health and wellbeing services, including Adults and Health, Public Health, Children's Services and Housing. This will enable us to understand impact and target future community development in the areas that need it most. It will inform our ways of working with partners to reduce inequalities and increase the amount of activity delivered in communities, by communities. Evidence shows that community-led activity improves local outcomes, as it is designed and delivered by those who know their communities and their place best. In future, the Council will support strong and empowered communities, where wellbeing is improved.

#### **5. Partnerships Powering Our Future**

We will be Stronger Together. Our collective power with partner organisations will make a positive difference to our communities, and we will remove organisational boundaries to help improve the services our communities can access.

Through collaborative working, our residents will experience seamless services that are joined up across partner organisations.

We will strive to build a network of local partners that speak and act with ‘One Voice’ as a recognised ‘Team Stockton’.

An initial meeting of Team Stockton in November 2023 demonstrated a strong commitment across partners. Priority areas for collaboration were identified as:

- Developing skills for public service
- Attracting and retaining talent
- Building Pride in Place
- Maximising use of shared resources
- Maximising digital technology
- Health and Social Care Integration.

A workplan focused on these areas is being developed, with initial milestones identified.

## 6. Transformation Powering Our Future

As previously reported to Cabinet, our Transformation Programme will ensure we:

- Reduce the budget gap by £9m and deliver a balanced budget each year
- Continue to deliver good and efficient services with the resources we have available.

The table below outlines an initial tranche of reviews and high-level scope of areas identified for review as part of Phase 1 of the Transformation Programme.

Theme	Project Name	Project Description	Scope
<b>CORPORATE SUPPORT</b>	Customer Contact and Access to Services	How residents, visitors, partners and businesses get in touch with us and access services	<p>Review of all the ways that people contact the Council to access services, with the aim to improve service delivery, community satisfaction and make effective use of organisation resources to ensure value for money</p> <p>The review will consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• methods of contact /access to services</li> <li>• use of technology</li> <li>• roles and responsibilities</li> <li>• service offer &amp; standards</li> <li>• structure alignment, future operating arrangements</li> </ul>

	Administration and Business Services	Administration and Business Services	<p>Review of organisation wide admin and business service functions including PA, Reception Services, Mail and Courier Services and all admin support.</p> <p>The review will consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• functions to be undertaken</li> <li>• customer access</li> <li>• use of technology</li> <li>• roles and responsibilities</li> <li>• structure alignment, future operating arrangements</li> </ul>
	Fleet Management	Use and management of Council Vehicles	<p>The review will consider current vehicle usage and future management</p> <p>This will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• demand for services</li> <li>• current and emerging statutory requirements</li> <li>• a revised approach for vehicle acquisition and fleet management including a financial forecasting model.</li> <li>• links to Environmental Strategy</li> </ul>
	Xentrall Shared Services with Darlington Borough Council	To review the partnership and consider expanding the current arrangements	Desktop baseline assessment to identify opportunities, risks and implications associated with potential expansion of shared service with Darlington. To inform future operating arrangements
<b>FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP</b>	Debt Management	How the Council collects money it is owed	<p>Review of organisation wide debt management functions, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• functions to be undertaken</li> <li>• customer access</li> <li>• roles and responsibilities</li> <li>• structure alignment, future operating arrangements</li> <li>• digitisation of process</li> </ul>
	Fees and Charges	How the Council sets its fees and charges for services	Review of all fees & charges, with a view to ensuring an organisation wide approach and to increase revenue

<b>CARE AND SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN AND ADULTS</b>	Children in our Care	Children in our Care	<p>Review of current placement practice and financial position including fostering, reunification and edge of care processes. It will focus on development of a future model to ensure that the number of children in our care reduces, and more children stay in their home.</p> <p>Where children are placed in our care, it will ensure that placements are cost effective and meet the required standards and agreed needs of the child.</p> <p>This includes commissioning, procurement and partnership arrangements. It covers all placement provision as outlined below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children’s Homes</li> <li>• Foster Carers</li> <li>• Independent Fostering Arrangements (IFA)</li> <li>• Special Guardianship Order (SGO)</li> <li>• Child Arrangement Order</li> <li>• Supported Accommodation</li> </ul>
	SEND (special educational needs & disabilities) / High Needs	Support for Children with special educational needs and disabilities	<p>Review of current use of high need funding to ensure that funding is sufficient and proportionate to meet current and future needs of children and young people, and reduction of exiting DSG (Dedicated Schools Grant) deficit. The scope includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council maintained schools, free schools and academies, budgets</li> <li>• Redesign of High Needs Banding</li> <li>• Better value for pupils</li> <li>• CPD (Continuous Professional Development) for school leaders and Children’s Service</li> <li>• Sufficiency of provision</li> </ul>
	Transitions to Adulthood	How the Council supports children with disabilities and those with special educational needs and disabilities as they become adults	<p>Review the arrangements to prepare and plan for people with needs to transition into adulthood. The scope will consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Special educational needs and disabilities</li> <li>• Mechanism for planning lifelong support</li> <li>• Partnership opportunities</li> </ul>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structure alignment future operating arrangements</li> </ul>
	<p>Intermediate Care</p>	<p>Support to help people live at home for longer</p>	<p>Review of mechanisms and services to support people living at home &amp; avoiding the need for long term residential care. This will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Home care services</li> <li>• Care at home market, home care market (including discharge to assess)</li> <li>• Reablement Service &amp; Rosedale Service.</li> <li>• Commissioning of future service requirements</li> </ul> <p>This will not review all of adult care but will influence spend across the whole service area.</p>
	<p>Early Intervention and Prevention</p>	<p>Early Help for children and families to help them remain healthy, happy and safe in their homes</p>	<p>Review of existing policy, process and operating arrangements to consider areas for improvement and opportunities to work more collaboratively across the wider organisation, as well as with schools and partners to transform and deliver an effective early intervention and prevention offer for Stockton children and families. The review will consider and/or impact on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public Health &amp; Domestic abuse services</li> <li>• Commissioned services</li> <li>• Libraries</li> <li>• Benefits &amp; Financial Inclusion</li> <li>• Homelessness Prevention &amp; Temporary Accommodation</li> <li>• Early Years</li> <li>• Children's early help</li> <li>• Relationship with schools</li> <li>• Youth Services</li> <li>• Young Offenders</li> <li>• One Call</li> <li>• Adult Learning &amp; Skills</li> <li>• VCS (Voluntary and Community Sector), public sector partners &amp; wider communities</li> <li>• Service alignment &amp; future operating arrangements</li> </ul>

	Community Transport	Transport arrangements for adults and children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and looked after children (LAC)	<p>The review will consider policy, and delivery requirements to meet policy priorities</p> <p>The scope will include Homes to School Transport provision to both mainstream and SEND and LAC children as well as Adult Transportation to the Council's two Adult Day Care Centres. It will consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• roles &amp; responsibilities</li> <li>• service offer</li> <li>• structure alignment, future operating arrangements</li> <li>• digitisation of process and customer access.</li> </ul>
COMMUNITY SERVICES	Waste Collection	Reshaped recycling, green waste & residual waste collection service	<p>Review of the domestic, green and food waste collection service provision including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• operational delivery/optimisation, waste minimisation</li> <li>• opportunities for income generation, financial stability and investment</li> <li>• digitisation of process and customer access</li> <li>• consideration of climate change agenda and national policy / legislation.</li> </ul>
	Community safety and regulatory services	Provision of community safety and organisation wide regulatory services	<p>Review of all Community Safety and Regulatory Service provision within the authority with a view to rationalising leadership, aligning priorities and responsibilities, and ensuring services are on a strong footing to meet future legislative changes that have either recently been implemented or are due shortly.</p> <p>The review will also consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current &amp; emerging statutory requirements</li> <li>• operational delivery/optimisation</li> <li>• digitisation of process and customer access</li> </ul>

To ensure the programme is focused on those areas where we can make the biggest difference given the current pressures, the Powering Our Futures Programme Board has undertaken a high-level rapid review of the programme plan with advice from Inner Circle consulting.



This will ensure that our capacity is prioritised effectively, and scope of the reviews is aligned to our aims of being more innovative, creative and working more collaboratively with our communities and partners. This will in turn enable us to provide good outcomes whilst being in a stable financial position.

Cabinet is recommended to agree in principle the scope of Phase 1 reviews as set out above. It is recommended that the Powering Our Future Programme Board (comprised of Corporate Management Team Members) has responsibility to agree the final scope, based on the outcome of the rapid review (noted above) and consideration of the full Project Initiation Documents.

Whilst there is a need to act with urgency to realise savings in the short-term, the Transformation Programme will form part of a longer-term approach to Powering Our Future. A proposed timetable for Phase 2 reviews will be brought to a future meeting of Cabinet for approval.

## 7. Our Colleagues Powering Our Future

Our Colleagues will be key to delivering Powering Our Future. We want to ensure that our workforce can step up to the challenging budget situation by using their knowledge and skills to work with our partners and communities in innovative, adaptable and dynamic ways with the best interests of our residents being the focus of everything they do.

An Employee Survey took place in September / October 2023. This has formed the baseline for our Workforce Development Strategy and will also support the future review of our Investors In People Accreditation, which expires in July 2024.

### Employee Survey Results

1,613 employees completed the survey which is approximately 46% of the workforce.

Overall, the results are positive and equivalent to, or slightly above the industry average. This is reassuring, especially given the amount of change (internally and externally) and challenge that has been experienced over the last few years.

Our highest scores included the following areas:

- My role enables me to work well with others
- I understand what is expected of me in my role
- My behaviours reflect the organisation's values
- I understand how my role contributes to the organisation.

Areas identified for improvement were:

- I am rewarded in ways that match my motivations
- I am consistently recognised when I exceed expectations
- I get appropriate recognition for the work I do
- I have a say in decisions that affect my role.

### Workforce Development Strategy

The Employee Survey, together with our Workforce Profile Data, has formed the evidence base for the Workforce Development Strategy, which is focused around the following areas:

- **Organisational Culture** - To have a strong organisational culture of shared values and behaviours that guide the way we work and how we make decisions, aligned to Powering Our Future ambitions
- **Communications & Engagement** - To have an effective communication and engagement strategy at all levels. This will ensure our colleagues and stakeholders understand corporate aims and priorities. It will facilitate bold, innovative and collaborative working, and ensure everyone understands the reason and context for change

- **Smarter Working** – To ensure we have the right resources, processes and working environment to do the job in the most efficient and smart way. This will empower staff to do their best for communities
- **Attract & Retain** – To have the best people with the right skills to Power Our Future. It is important we remain competitive with our Employee Reward Offer to be an attractive employer of choice and retain a talented and dedicated workforce.
- **Happy & Healthy Workforce** – To ensure that everyone supports and pays attention to their own as well as their colleagues' wellbeing.
- **Workforce Planning** - To ensure we have a workforce fit for the future we will embed and improve workforce planning across our organisation so that we understand our workforce profile to address future demands.
- **Workforce Development** – To provide employees with development opportunities to support retention, succession planning, future leaders and ensure we have a workforce with the right skills able to meet current and future demands. We will empower our colleagues to use their skills and talent to be innovative, entrepreneurial, dynamic and adaptable in all that they do.

Each of the areas above will form a workstrand of the Colleagues Powering our Future Mission. A project management approach will be coordinated through the Colleagues Powering our Future Steering Group. Cabinet will be updated on workstrand progress in future Programme Update reports.

#### Smart Working Policy

A Draft Smart Working Policy is attached at Appendix 1 for Cabinet approval. This forms part of the Council's Workforce Strategy and is key to Powering our Future. The policy will replace the Flexible Working Pilots and builds on the report considered by Members' Advisory Panel in October 2022, which recognised that a one size fits all approach is not appropriate and that a customer and business focused approach needs to be retained.

The draft policy sets out high-level principles for Smart Working, which will be supplemented by detailed guidance, training and support for our employees.

Our Principles for Smart Working are:

- We will be Bold, Brave and Innovative in the way we work
- We will work more collaboratively with our stakeholders, including our communities and partner organisations
- We will drive innovation and continuous improvement, whether through service changes or challenging and changing working practices
- We will use our resources such as data, technology, equipment and workplaces more efficiently
- Our Colleagues will have more choice about where and when they work, to improve community wellbeing and reduce inequality.

### **8. Regeneration Powering Our Future**

Our approach to regeneration and economic growth will be critical to the future prosperity and wellbeing of our communities.

Our exciting regeneration projects will make sure Stockton-on-Tees is a place of choice for business. Not only will this generate more income through Council Tax and Business Rates, but there will also be more employment opportunities too, which will reduce demand on services, saving us money.

The focus of our activity will be:

- Building a bright future for Our Six Towns - our towns are at the heart of our communities and we have a large scale programme of investment across all of them to make sure we adapt to the changing face of retail and the pressures that they face.
- Delivering our ambitions for a Care and Health Innovation Zone at Teesdale Business Park and the adjacent Marshalling Yards in Thornaby
- Ensuring we have the transport infrastructure that connects communities with opportunities for work, learning and leisure
- Developing a bold Place Brand that celebrates our assets, reflects the strengths and vibrancy of our communities, to reinforce our Pride in Place, attract investment and talent to our Borough.

## **COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS**

Powering Our Future puts communities at the heart of everything we do. It will change the way we work with our communities so they use their knowledge, skills and strengths to help them deliver positive outcomes for themselves. Not only will this save money, it will mean that our residents are healthy, happy and feel like they belong.

Our approach will:

- Empower communities and increase individual, family and community level activities, helping people and communities to be independent and have less reliance on Council services.
- Always look for opportunities to be innovative and improve the way we work, so that we remain in the best possible financial position now and in the future
- Ensure that if we redesign a service, we will do this in a way that minimises impact for our residents, communities and partner organisations.

A Community Impact Assessment will be undertaken for individual reviews as required.

## **CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS**

There are no direct impacts on Corporate Parenting as a result of this report. Implications will be identified as part of individual project activity for Powering Our Future.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

As outlined in the Medium Term Financial Plan update report to Cabinet in December 2023, the Council is forecasting a budget gap of £9m by 2026/27. The Transformation Programme will ensure we address the budget gap and deliver a balanced budget each year.

The achievement of financial savings from the Phase 1 reviews will be essential to addressing the budget gap. Updates will be brought back to future Cabinet meetings regarding Phase 1 and Phase 2 reviews.

## **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no direct legal impacts as a result of this report. Implications will be identified and legal advice sought/provided as part of individual project activity for Powering Our Future.

## **RISK ASSESSMENT**

This report provides an update on the development of the Powering out Futures Programme. There are two main risks associated with the programme. Firstly, the programme doesn't achieve the levels of financial savings needed to put the Council on a financially sustainable footing. Secondly, the programme does not improve outcomes for our communities. Both these risks could lead to reputational risk.

To manage the risks, the Council has implemented a robust governance structure to manage the Powering our Futures programme. The structure includes senior management oversight, steering groups for each strand of the programme, clearly defined projects and programme and project management arrangements and regular reporting to Cabinet. In addition, the programme will be appropriately resourced with additional officer capacity to ensure outputs are achieved that lead to delivering the aims of the programme.

## **WARDS AFFECTED AND CONSULTATION WITH WARD/COUNCILLORS**

Powering Our Future is a Borough-wide Programme.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- Financial Update and MTFP Report to Cabinet (December 2023)

**Name of Contact Officer: Geraldine Brown**

**Post Title: Head of Policy Development & Public Affairs**

**Telephone No. 01642 527657**

**Email Address: [Gerladine.brown@stockton.gov.uk](mailto:Gerladine.brown@stockton.gov.uk)**