

# Being A Better Council – Year 1 Review

Leader of the Council

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Agenda Item: 5

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Key Decision? YES

Local Ward All Wards.

Members

Lichfield  
district council

**CABINET**

## 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 In November 2021, Cabinet approved the organisational change programme, Being a Better Council 2021 – 2024. The programme (strategy) was designed to help us become the council we recognised we need, and want to be, a council that is more responsive to the changing needs and expectations of our residents.
- 1.2 In approving the programme, Cabinet recognised a need to rethink how services are structured and managed, to introduce new technologies and improve access to those services for our residents and businesses and to challenge how and what we do. It recognised the need to make these changes based on our ‘invisible competition’, the organisations against whom our residents compare and benchmark the way our services are organised and provided. This programme is our response, a plan for substantial and sustainable changes to our organisational structures, performance, and culture.
- 1.3 Cabinet set a timeframe for its implementation between December 2021 and March 2023, with improvements to services and measures of success realised between April 2022 and March 2025.
- 1.4 This paper provides Cabinet with a first review of progress to date of the Being A Better Council programme at the end of the first year of implementation and the impact it has had on the overall performance of the council.

## 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet review progress to date of the programme and in particular the indicators of success set.
- 2.2 That Cabinet agree the need to become ‘entrepreneurial’ in order to continue our improvement in Being A Better Council, and achieve our place shaping ambitions for the district.

## 3. Background

- 3.1 The Being a Better Council programme is our response to public services being in the spotlight of local communities more today than at any point in history. It recognises needs have changed, expectations have increased, and frustrations are easier than ever to share instantly. It seeks to respond to our residents’ ambition for Lichfield district and the need for us to place make, where only we can. It acknowledges our services have struggled to rise to the challenges we face, that we have often been reactive and fixed in ‘fire-fighting’ mode with less time and capacity to think about place shaping across the whole district.
- 3.2 The purpose of the programme is to change how we think and operate as a council - to create quality environments where people want to live, work, play and learn in, to strengthen relationships with

residents, businesses, and partners and importantly, to improve the quality of services we provide and our capacity to become proactive, prevent demand and/or intervene early in the way we organise ourselves. Cabinet's intent, in approving the programme, was to continually monitor progress against these objectives and this paper provides the first such monitoring opportunity, at the end of the first year of implementation.

### **How the programme has performed in year 1.**

- 3.3 The programme has been governed by a Programme Board (Officer led) and Steering Group (Councillor led) during its first year. The Programme Board met monthly, with individual project boards presenting progress reports / requests for intervention as required. The Steering Group provided strategic leadership and decision making as and when required. Since October 2022, the Programme Board and Steering Group have been 'stood down' with delivery of the remainder of the programme passed to Leadership Team as a 'business as usual' activity.
- 3.4 Overall, the programme is making good progress.
- The council is now led by a new Leadership Team and Wider Leadership Team, with new skillsets, drive, and ambition.
  - The focus on 'Being A Better Council' is a key narrative, reiterated frequently by the new leadership across the council.
  - There is now an aggressive focus on efficiency while protecting what matters most to residents.
  - Savings, both those identified specifically by the programme, and others, have been achieved.
  - This renewed focus on finances enables capacity to deliver place shaping with a new cinema, a new leisure centre, new parks, in-sourcing leisure, community safety events, starting in earnest to bring forward the BRS site all examples of progress over the last 12 months.
  - Our organisational structures have changed fundamentally. We are moving towards becoming an 'horizontal' organisation with single services for things like customer contact, policy and strategy and performance management.
  - The council's wholly owned company is now trading, with three business streams active (Talent Acquisition, Corporate Landlord and Capital Works) and more to follow in the new financial year.
  - Structures for improved data and performance management are now also in place. Our Social Progress Index holds data for 50+ wellbeing indicators at a ward level, so we can begin to compare indicators across the district and see hotspots in wards so we can provide targeted interventions and action.
  - The staff annual appraisal process has been revamped with all staff now the subject of 'Objectives and Key Results', which will be monitored monthly.
  - From a service perspective too, we are starting to identify key indicators to help us monitor how services are doing more effectively.
  - With the council now reshaped, an ongoing investment in management skills and competencies and a focus on performance management, we have now begun to turn attention towards individual services and their improvement journeys.
- 3.5 We need to invest in and develop our managers, and that is a priority as we move into year two of the programme. Further work also needs to be undertaken to develop three-year Service Plans for services, so we can map and then track their progress in the medium term. We have invested in new technologies like Robotics, Chatbots and a new telephony system (all live) and we now need to focus on extending their use to create the 'digital layer' for our new customer services and single front door. The roll out of new technology and digital solutions stands out as the key part of the programme that is lagging, but the arrival of our new Assistant Director for this area has created clarity and a drive to deliver which is already generating more momentum. The table below sets out progress against each of the key projects identified for the programme:

Workstream	Definition	Target date	Actual date	Progress @ February 2023
Organisation Design / Target Operating Model	<p>Developed a new organisational operating model of horizontal services which are designed from our residents' point of view including a:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Front Office – residents' services.</li> <li>• Middle Office – bringing together of similar activities while protecting specialisms.</li> <li>• Core -which drives policy and strategy, performance, and finance.</li> </ul>	<p>Agreed – Mar 2022</p> <p>Live – Mar 2023</p>	<p>Agreed Jul 2022</p> <p>Live - Oct 2022</p>	<p><b>Achieved late.</b> The new Target Operating Model (TOM) was developed and approved by Employment Committee in July 22. The model delivers the components anticipated through a new horizontal structuring of services.</p> <p><b>Achieved early.</b> The new TOM was implemented and 'live' on 1 October 2022.</p>
Commercialisation (Business case)	<p>Approved revised Business Case for our trading activities (currently Lichfield Housing Ltd) identifying and detailing those areas where we can operate commercially and trade effectively.</p> <p>Implemented new commercial structures and activities.</p>	<p>May 2022</p> <p>Jan 2023</p>	<p>Jan 2022</p> <p>April 2022</p>	<p><b>Achieved early.</b> A paper setting out the potential for the wholly own company was approved by Cabinet as was a subsequent report outlining the initial activities intended for the company.</p> <p><b>Achieved early.</b> The company is now trading those first 3 activities, it's Board is in place, as is a refreshed business plan for the current year. A 4<sup>th</sup> activity (provision of DFG services) was approved later in the year. Additional trading opportunities are now in development.</p>
Enhanced Digital Services	<p>Implemented a Digital Innovation Hub team structure aligned to the delivery of digital plans.</p> <p>Developed plans and implementation timeframes for an extension of digital services and technologies (Automation / RPA, enhanced Website, extended JADU platform etc.) to enable and to empower our residents to self-serve 24/7.</p>	<p>Mar 2022</p> <p>May 2022</p>	<p>Oct 2022</p> <p>Oct 2022</p>	<p><b>Achieved late.</b> Implementation of a new digital service was delayed coinciding, due to lack of progress leading to changes to the project lead, with the implementation of the remainder of the TOM.</p> <p><b>Achieved late.</b> While some planning was completed, and indeed the procurement of new technologies (chatbots, RPA, new telephony) was commenced – no real clarity of purpose or drive forward was achieved by the original May deadline. The new AD, Customer, Residents and Business has now put this infrastructure and clarity in place and the team is beginning to function as intended through the TOM.</p>
Data Driven Council	<p>Developed core well-being indicators at a District and Ward level to drive decision making.</p> <p>Started to use data to forecast demand and predict service requests and requirements.</p>	<p>Jun 2022</p> <p>Jun 2022 +</p>	<p>Apr - Oct 2022</p> <p>-</p>	<p><b>Achieved late.</b> The 50+ indicators of wellbeing were commenced but not all completed by the June deadline. Again, progress was stalled, and the project lead subsequently replaced.</p> <p><b>Delayed.</b> Now the data set is complete (Oct 22), we can begin to use it in understanding and forecasting demand going forwards.</p>

IT Strategy	Developed an IT Strategy to articulate the technology and infrastructure (e.g. Cloud IT) we need to support a better council.	Mar 2022	-	<b>Delayed.</b> This project stalled until the project lead was changed. It now has clarity and additional capacity, and capabilities have been commissioned from the private sector to support.
Community Engagement Strategy	Refreshed engagement strategy focused on locality-based engagement and decision making.	Nov 2021	March 2022	<b>Achieved late.</b> Delivered through a Community Power Strategy, approved by Cabinet. This identifies locality-based engagement and decision making.
Comms Team Restructure	Transformed communications and engagement activity under one management structure.	Mar 2022	Mar 2022	<b>Achieved.</b> Our approach to delivering the Communications function has changed through the current externalisation of the activity – leading to improvement. Cabinet approved a business case to formalize this arrangement over the next 5 years in February 2023.
Customer Experience Strategy	Developed a Customer Experience Strategy underpinning our Single Front Office approach and resident centric focus.	July 2022	-	<b>Postponed.</b> Successful implementation of the single front door and customer services team may render this activity unnecessary. It is currently postponed for review in early 2023.
Performance Management Framework – Services	Developed a revised PMF for the council, better aligned to our Strategic Plan – based on outcome focused three-year service plans and balanced score card performance targets.	Dec 21 / Jan 2022	-	<b>Delayed.</b> We attempted to implement a new PMF for April 2022 with mixed success. The new Chief Operating Officer is now leading on this activity and new services plans will be rolled out at the beginning of the next financial year.
Management Development	Identified and embedding behaviours essential to deliver change <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performance management – high support, high challenge</li> <li>• Identify learning and development needs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Leadership development</li> <li>○ Line management development</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Sept 2022	-	<b>Delayed.</b> Whilst a lot of work has been achieved to identify, develop, and embed better management behaviours, the planned high turnover of tier 3 and 4 managers has delayed focused training in this area. The new Leadership Team and Wider Leadership team is now in place and learning and development needs is a priority to deliver in FY23.
Digital collaboration	Identified and mandating use of digital tools to improve collaboration amongst teams, across services and with residents.	April 2022	Ongoing	<b>Achieved.</b> Use of Teams as a collaborative tool has increased significantly, leading to closer working across the new horizontal structures.
People / Belonging Strategy	Developed and implementing a strategy which supports our values and purpose – aligned to our Strategic Plan and focused on providing officers with support, development and a working environment that enables achievement of our objectives and priorities.	Jan 2022	Ongoing	<b>Achieved.</b> Significant progress has been made on changing the working environment for staff and creating a culture that recognises, values, and celebrates our diversity while creating a stronger ‘one team’ culture.
Performance Management Framework - People	Developed and implemented a process for ensuring day to day activities meet the needs of our residents and delivery our goals effectively and efficiently, while recognizing and celebrating	April 2022	Sept 2022	<b>Achieved late.</b> A new Objectives and Key Results framework was rolled out for all staff in 2022. This will be further honed and improved in 2023.

	contributions of staff.			
Customer Centricity training for all staff	Developed and implementing training to help better align our council and services with the needs of our residents – embedding a culture where all our staff put our residents at the heart of what we do.	June 2022	Sept 2022	<b>Achieved late.</b> All staff have undertaken mandatory customer centricity training in 2022.

3.6 The programme identified key indicators at the outset, with the aim of achieving improvements against each over its life. A snapshot of current performance of some of those indicators is provided in the following table.

Benefits	KPI or Action	Baseline	Target	Actual
			2022/23	2022/23
Financial management	Savings targets are achieved	£5.2m - £6.7m savings by March 2025  Further savings of £2.2m - £2.7m by March 2026	£1.3m - £1.8m	£1.5m (2022/23)  £5.1m (Mar 2025)
	Dividend payment realized from trading activities	First dividend expected in 2022/23	>£100K	Forecast approx. £40k
	Reduction in the number of high priority audit recommendations overdue	10 April 2021	<8	8 (Dec 22)
	% residents feel the council provides value for money	34% Jan 2021 Budget consultation	50%	TBC (Q1 2023)
	Reduction in number of Freedom of Information requests	275	230	216
Increased resident satisfaction	% residents who are overall very or fairly satisfied with LDC	60% Jan 2021 Budget consultation	70%	TBC (Q1 2023)
	% fewer complaints received	85 2020/21	15% (72)	26% (63)
	% residents expressing great deal or fair amount of trust in LDC	62% Jan 2021 Budget consultation	70%	TBC (Q1 2023)
	% performance targets achieved	To be baselined - by March '22	70%	TBC
	% internal audits rated as 'substantial assurance' <sup>1</sup>	32% March 2021	40%	36% (Dec 22)
	% residents who feel fairly, or well informed about our services	54% Jan 2021 Budget consultation	60%	TBC (Q1 2023)
Staff satisfaction	% staff who are satisfied with LDC as their employer	68% Oct '21 (Small sample)	80%	69% Oct '22
	% staff who have confidence in the leadership skills of their manager	64% Oct '21 (Small sample)	70%	68% Oct '22
	% staff who agree their manager is an excellent role model	61% Oct '21 (Small sample)	75%	64% Oct '22
	% staff who agree their manager exhibits our values the majority of the time	70% Oct '21 (Small sample)	80%	76% Oct '22
	% staff who have confidence in the leadership skills of the senior leadership team	57% Oct '21 (Small sample)	65%	69% Oct '22

<sup>1</sup> Substantial assurance - There is a sound system of internal control designed to achieve the organisation's objectives. The control processes tested are being consistently applied.

	% staff who have confidence in the leadership skills of the Leader and Cabinet	Baseline before March 2022	TBC	54% Oct '22
	% staff who agree the senior leadership team exhibit our values	56% Oct '21 (Small sample)	75%	71% Oct '22
	% of staff who agree they would be happy to be still working at the council in one year	66% Oct '21 (Small sample)	75%	64% Oct '22

3.7 Against all our key indicators we have either maintained or improved performance in 2022/23. This provides us with a good foundation and a positive direction of travel for 2023/24. We set ourselves stretching targets at the beginning of the year, as such we have achieved some but not all of them. We will use the learning from the last 12 months to review and set targets for the remaining years of the programme.

3.8 Progress against targets set for the following indicators will be measured in early 2023:

- % Overall resident satisfaction
- % Residents who agree the council keeps them well informed
- % Residents who agree the council offers value for money
- % Residents expressing trust in the council

### **What comes next – entrepreneurial council**

3.9 The investment and focus on the Being A Better Council programme has created a positive new energy, momentum and confidence within the organisation. It has supported a real clarity of purpose for both Councillor and senior officer cohorts who are more ambitious to have a positive impact for our district.

3.10 As part of that ambition, in December 2022, Cabinet and Full Council approved a revision to the reserves policy. It agreed a managed reduction in earmarked reserves in the medium (three years) term, alongside a need to replenish them again thereafter. Through this policy the council has been able to move forward with its place shaping initiatives introduced above (the new cinema, new leisure centre, new sports and leisure facilities plans etc). In committing to replenish reserves used for place shaping initiatives, the council has effectively issued a challenge to the Cabinet and senior officers – to become a council capable of delivering the expectations of our residents while being financially sustainable in the longer term.

3.11 Local authorities have started a discourse on this topic; how to fulfil core functions while designing and delivering transformational change (internally and externally) in an environment of reduced core funding, rising expectations and demand. The answer is a new, entrepreneurial mindset.

3.12 Entrepreneurial in this context means agile, able to solve problems, collaborative and focussed on delivery. Being entrepreneurial in the way we think about our services, our priorities, means not conforming to traditional approaches and ways we've always done things. It means thinking and operating differently:

- The new Target Operating Model, designed as part of the Being A Better Council programme, is intended to aid operating differently; it has created a horizontal structure enabling cross-departmental ways of working.
- Where traditional services and structures do not work for our residents, we will be bold and change them. A good example of this is our Planning Service, it is responsible for both processing small scale residential / householder planning applications and for enabling significant, major developments of housing and employment land and yet has not changed

greatly in terms of structure and approach since the Planning Act was enacted in 1946. We will challenge and disrupt services that do not work for our residents, reorganising them in practical functions capable of delivering their core purpose.

- Alongside a laser focus on the core purpose of services, we will develop a stronger understanding of what residents need from them.
- We will effectively manage the cost of providing services, measure the impact of how we provide them and challenge our staff to be collaborative in achieving priorities.
- We will empower staff to be bold, embrace change, and bring forward new ideas on how we can change services for the better. We will encourage them to share and grow ideas, both internally and externally.
- We will foster a “learn fast” mindset where staff feel empowered and supported to try new things, test new approaches and pivot, when necessary, to put key learnings into action.
- Externally, we will develop creative responses to challenges, to achieve more. Partnerships (with both public and private sectors) and our wholly owned company offer an opportunity to deliver more priorities for the district and protect services.
- Our joint venture approach, with a commercial partner, to the development of a cinema for the district is a good example of how we tackle place shaping problems we have wrestled with for a long time. Similar approaches will be employed to bring forward the remainder of the Birmingham Road Site.
- Our trading company, LWMTS, will grow over the next three years to incorporate a series of new activities, where doing so offers greater flexibility and freedom and an opportunity to generate both savings and new revenue to the council, to replenish our reserves.

Alternative Options	1. Do nothing – This would not enable us to systematically challenge what we do and how we do it. It would not enable us to tackle long term place shaping priorities. It would not enable us to respond to financial pressures we are facing.
Consultation	1. Leadership Team
Financial Implications	No additional financial implications from this report. It is very important therefore to highlight that funding gaps are projected from 2025/26 onwards based on finance reform being implemented by Government. Therefore, savings and additional income options will still need to be identified and a commitment to their delivery will be required should these projections reflect the actual form and impact of finance reform.
Approved by Section 151 Officer	Yes
Legal Implications	The change programme manages risks around changes to roles and contracts of employment for staff and ensures all statutory obligations can still be met. Governance forms part of our core capacity.
Approved by Monitoring Officer	Yes
Contribution to the Delivery of	1. Enables achievement of our objective to be A Good Council that is – financially sound, transparent and accountable and responsive and customer focussed 2. Becoming A Good Council will in turn enable us to deliver the other strands of our Strategic Plan 2020 – 2024:

<b>the Strategic Plan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Enable people to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Help themselves and others</li> <li>ii. Collaborate and engage with us</li> <li>iii. Live healthy and active lives</li> </ul> </li> <li>b. Shape place to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Keep it clean, green and safe</li> <li>ii. Preserve the characteristics</li> <li>iii. Make sure sustainability and infrastructure needs are balanced</li> </ul> </li> <li>c. Develop prosperity to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Encourage economic growth</li> <li>ii. Enhance the district for all</li> <li>iii. Invest in the future</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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<b>Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Implications</b>	1. There are no equality, diversity or human right implications associated with this paper.
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<b>Crime &amp; Safety Issues</b>	1. There are no crime and safety implications associated with this paper.
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<b>Environmental Impact</b>	1. There are no environmental implications associated with this paper.
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<b>GDPR / Privacy Impact Assessment</b>	1. There are GDPR / Privacy implications associated with this paper.
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	<b>Risk Description &amp; Risk Owner</b>	<b>Original Score (RYG)</b>	<b>How We Manage It</b>	<b>Current Score (RYG)</b>
A	Changes in national policy adversely impact current and future ambitions - LT	Likelihood: Y Impact: Y Overall Risk: Y	To monitor policy developments and through responding to consultation seek to influence policy development in the Council's favour.	Likelihood: Y Impact: G Overall Risk: Y
B	Changes jeopardise statutory obligations - KD	Likelihood: Y Impact: Y Severity: Y	Robust project methodology and good governance principles embedded to manage risk and ensure legal compliance.	Likelihood: G Impact: Y Severity: G
C	Impact on customers during periods of change - LB	Likelihood: Y Impact: Y Severity: Y	Ensure robust project methodology is employed to capture data, demand and expectations. Clear engagement along with robust user testing.	Likelihood: G Impact: Y Severity: G
D	Inability and capacity to make the necessary changes internally - KD	Likelihood: Y Impact: R Severity: Y	The programme has been designed to change the culture as well as deliver projects. Employment implications are managed to ensure staff are developed and have the ability to deliver.	Likelihood: G Impact: Y Severity: Y



	Background documents
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	Relevant web links
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