



<b>Report for:</b>	<b>Cabinet</b>
<b>Date of meeting:</b>	<b>19 May 2020</b>
<b>PART:</b>	<b>1</b>
If Part II, reason:	

<b>Title of report:</b>	<b>New Normal Programme</b>
Contact:	<p>Cllr Andrew Williams – Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Corporate and Contracted Services</p> <p><b>Author/Responsible Officers:</b>  Sally Marshall – Chief Executive  Linda Roberts – Assistant Director (Performance, People &amp; Innovation)</p>
Purpose of report:	To update members on the progress of the New Normal Programme which is a council wide approach to continuous improvement and change management and seek Cabinet approval for further, upcoming projects in the Programme.
Recommendations	That Cabinet notes the progress on the New Normal programme and the proposals for resuming the programme and future projects.
Corporate objectives:	Ensuring efficient, effective and modern service delivery.
Risk Implications	<p>Change occurs continuously by adopting a Council wide approach to change management it enhances the Council's ability to examine opportunities presented by change; to avoid duplication of effort and ensure the maximum services benefit from improvements.</p> <p>The main risk for this type of activity is that it is a programme of work that has to be managed. This has been mitigated by the development of a programme structure with clear sponsorship and direction, using existing approval mechanisms and will be widely communicated going forward.</p>
Equalities Implications	No implications from this report. An equalities impact assessment will be undertaken in respect of programme of projects contained within the four work streams.

Health And Safety Implications	No implications from this report.
Monitoring Officer/S.151 Officer Comments	<b>Monitoring Officer:</b>  <b>Deputy S.151 Officer</b>
Consultees:	James Deane (Corporate Director Finance and Operations)  Mark Gaynor (Corporate Director Housing and Planning)  Mark Brookes (Assistant Director Corporate and Contracted Services)  Corporate Management Team
Background papers:	
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	
Appendices	Appendix 1 – New Normal Programme Plan February 2020

## Background

1. In February 2019 the Council approved the New Normal strategy. This strategy outlines the Council's approach to change management and recognises that the Council, its elected Members and Officers need to ensure a culture of continuous improvement is embedded within the organisation, given that society is continuously changing.
2. As a result, the Council needs to be in a position to adapt its approach to service delivery to meet these needs. Whilst this is predominantly an internally focused strategy, its outcomes will affect the Council's relationships with its Residents, Communities and Partners.
3. In November 2019 Cabinet approved to release £93,495 from the Management of Change reserve to fund the development of the Robotic Process Automation (RPA) pilot projects and the Business Process Re-engineering (BPR) pilot projects. The suppliers were procured through the Council's procurement procedures and T-Impact were selected as the supplier for the RPA projects and Sopra Steria as the supplier for the BPR projects.

## Progress made prior to Covid-19 pandemic

4. The combined programme plan as at February 2020 is shown in Appendix A. There is a box over the projects that have been affected by the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.
5. Both the RPA and BPR technology projects started in late November/early December but were delayed as the General Election was called in December which impacted on the Council's ability to participate. However they soon started again in early January 2020, the following progress was made:

5.1. **RPA** – Four processes were identified and prioritised to be developed as proof of concept projects. Two were from Finance which were the automatic Importing of Invoices and the automatic Coding of Utility Bills. The third was a robot to enable files to be automatically indexed in the Council's document management system (Information at Work) and for Housing the automatic loading of over 25,000 microfiche records into the Housing system.

Capture of the current processes and development of the robots had commenced but the final play back sessions and sign off has not been completed. This was scheduled the week that the Council went into lockdown conditions.

5.2. **BPR** – BPR projects were started in Housing to look at the Voids Process and how the "key to key" process can be reduced, and another was started looking across the Council at how to improve mobile working for Field Officers. All the workshops were completed for both projects but the final playback sessions were not completed with all the participants.

5.3. **New HR** system - The People and Leadership work-stream is very dependent on the successful implementation of the new corporate HR system i-Trent. This is currently at the last phase of User Acceptance Testing and will go-live at a suitable time in the summer. Once this has been implemented work will start on implementing the next phase to include Appraisals, Talent Management, Succession Planning and Workforce Planning.

5.4. In January 2020 the Council launched an improved **Recruitment microsite** <https://www.dacorum.gov.uk/home/recruitment> and have also successfully launched a **Graduate and Apprentice scheme**. The Council currently has 2 graduates (3 Graduates soon to be appointed) and 5 Apprentices. We also have 16 employees undertaking upskilling training via the apprenticeship levy framework.

5.5. A **Coaching and Mentoring scheme** has been drafted, and a new HR Team Leader has been successfully recruited into post and started in mid-April 2020.

5.6. The main aim of the **Community Leadership programme** was to ensure that all councillors were sufficiently trained in key areas relevant to the Council's activities and to give members the skills to perform a leadership role in their local communities. The initial training programme is now substantially complete. A further training needs analysis will be done to identify if any further sessions are required.

## **Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic**

6. The impact of the pandemic has been substantial on the progress of the New Normal programme in the short term. Due to the lockdown measures, all work has been suspended whilst our officers focus on the delivery of their services during this unprecedented time.
7. However one opportunity that has been presented by the change in working practices is a very rapid deployment of remote working tools such as MS Teams. Face to face meetings have been replaced by MS Teams Video and Audio meetings, and the rest of the functionality is used to support working from home and support the management of those officers who can work from home.
8. One of the projects that has been disrupted was the pilot investigation into Mobile Working for Field Officers. Although far more staff are successfully working from home than before the pandemic, they are not carrying out a full range of duties as a result of the lockdown restrictions. Therefore, the full solution for remote working has yet to be developed or deployed. Further work to develop remote access to certain key systems that currently is not available will be required as lockdown restrictions are revised, this aspect of work will be kept under review and work will commence when possible. For example, Environmental Health Officers being able to access Flare when performing on premise inspections.
9. Group Managers and their teams will be consulted to identify good practice and understand lessons to be learnt in terms of People, Process and Technology deployed whilst working remotely. This feedback will help inform the prioritisation of the existing projects and define the shape of the future programme.
10. When rescheduling the projects in the programme the Council will be cognisant of the challenges faced by our staff during this period of change and ensure that the requirement for change is balanced with the demands on the individual and focus on any improvements that can be made to support staff to be more efficient and productive.

### **Projects due to have started**

11. A number of related projects were due to have started during the period of the start of the pandemic. All are still relevant to the progress of the overall New Normal programme as detailed below:
  - 11.1. **Complete review of RPA pilot projects** – The development of the pilot robots was nearly complete with final playback sessions to be run with the project teams. This would confirm that the robots work as expected and the potential performance improvement to feed into the business case. The Post-Implementation Review will also identify any lessons to be learned to take into the development of more robots.
  - 11.2. **Move RPA pilot projects into the Live Environment** – It is standard practice not to develop software in the live environment. Once we have proved the success of the pilot robots there needs to be work done to move them into the live environment. This will include the supplier and the ICT Team and should only be done once we are confident that the ICT has the bandwidth to support it given the reliance on ICT for the Council during lockdown.
  - 11.3. **Mobile Working for Field Officers** – The rollout of MS Teams has been achieved through the vast increase in working from home

through the lockdown measures. However we still need to develop a solution to enable Field Workers to operate remotely. The BPR review identified what needed to be done and also a number of new technologies to support this. A pilot project should be scoped and run before rollout across the Council.

11.4. **Business case for BPR review of Cupid Green Depot**

The impact on the Depot of the pandemic has been significant and it is recommended that this review be postponed until next year.

11.4.1.1. **Business case for BPR review of Complaints, FOI requests and MP Enquiries** – The next area proposed to be reviewed was how the Council manages Complaints, FOI requests and MP Enquiries. This is a complex process that impacts the whole of the Council and takes significant amount of officer time. The current system has historically been developed in-house but with improvements in underlying technology there are more products on the market which could provide significant productivity improvements. Therefore, it is essential that full review is undertaken and a plan for process improvement prepared as part of the basis of any requirement specification before investment in a new system.

11.5. **Development of new ICT Operating Model** - This piece of work was to produce a recommendation on how ICT should be governed and managed going forward. This is to reflect the new ways of working in ICT with moves to platforms such as cloud based solutions. This work is still be done as the ICT team have had to focus on supporting the current systems and infrastructure when there is such a reliance on home working at this difficult time.

11.6. **Strategic technology reviews of core service systems Flare and Orchard** - Flare is used by Environmental and Community Protection, and Orchard is used by Housing. The version of Flare used by the Council is supplied by Civica and is coming to the end of its shelf life as the supplier will soon be withdrawing support for it. There is a cloud based successor for this product from Civica (Cx), however we believe it is important to assess the current and future requirements of the users and assess what other solutions are available before than necessarily replacing with Cx.

Orchard has been used for over 25 years in the Council and as it stands there are 3 separate versions currently in use. The supplier Orchard Systems has recently been bought by an American software company MRI software. Before standardising on a single version which will require significant investment it is prudent to review requirements and understand what other housing solutions are available before than necessarily replacing with a single Orchard version.

## **Next Steps**

12. Once the lockdown measures start to be eased the New Normal programme will be rescheduled but must take into account the capacity of the officers to participate in more change during a continuing challenging period as well as the capacity of the internal ICT team. The next steps, but not necessarily scheduled in this order are:

- Collate and analyse feedback on good practice and areas for improvement, in relation to large scale working from home and ensure that this is feed into the schedule of the programme and other internal work.
- Scope the revised Mobile Working for Field Officers pilot project. Run and manage the project.
- Complete playback sessions of the pilot robots and document potential benefits and capture learning in the Post-Implementation Review.
- Move the pilot robots into the live environment.
- Review long list of candidate processes for robots and identify new robots to be developed and produce business cases to support development.
- Develop the business case, including the receipt or a proposal from Sopra Steria, for a full BPR review of the Complaints, FOI request and MP Enquiries processes.
- Develop the future IT Operating Model which takes into account the change in how systems are licensed and supported including the move to Cloud only licenses.
- Develop the business cases for the technical reviews of Flare and Orchard Housing in preparation for the replacement of the existing systems.

## **Recommendations**

1. That Cabinet notes the progress on the New Normal programme and the proposals for resuming the programme and future projects.