



Agenda item: 9

Summary

Report for:	Finance & Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting:	13 October 2020
Part:	1
If Part II, reason:	

Title of report:	New Normal Programme Update
Contact:	<p>Cllr Andrew Williams – Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Corporate and Contracted Services</p> <p>Author/Responsible Officers: Sally Marshall – Chief Executive Linda Roberts – Assistant Director (Performance, People & Innovation)</p>
Purpose of report:	To update members on the continued progress of the New Normal Programme which is a council wide approach to continuous improvement and change.
Recommendations	The Finance and Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee are recommended to review and note the progress made.
Corporate objectives:	Ensuring efficient, effective and modern service delivery.
Implications:	<p><u>Financial</u> The New Normal project has £93,495 that was drawn down from reserves in November 2019. Pilot projects were developed for both RPA and BPR and the results of the pilots are contained in this report</p>
'Value for money' implications	<p><u>'Value for money' implications</u> The projects were funded from technology reserves. Further development of RPA projects will only be done through the production of successful business cases that will be reviewed by the Programme Board.</p> <p>The BPR work was impeded by lockdown however it was felt that where there is a requirement to provide a specific outcome, such as a specific requirement document for a new system to support a process, it would be better value for money to either use existing available business analysis</p>

	resource or if there is limited availability to use a business analyst contractor than the team approach used by Sopra Steria.
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>
Community Impact Assessment	The content of this report does not require a Community Impact Assessment to be undertaken.
Health and safety Implications	No implications from this report
Consultees:	<p>James Deane (Corporate Director Finance and Operations)</p> <p>Mark Gaynor (Corporate Director Housing and Planning)</p> <p>Mark Brookes (Assistant Director Corporate and Contracted Services)</p> <p>Corporate Management Team</p>
Background papers:	<p>New Normal strategy approved February 2019</p> <p>New Normal programme update May 2020</p>
Historical background <i>(please give a brief background to this report to enable it to be considered in the right context).</i>	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>
Glossary of acronyms and any other abbreviations used in this report:	<p>BPR (Business Process Reengineering)</p> <p>RPA (Robotic Process Automation)</p>

Background

1. The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the progress of New Normal projects during March to May 2020. This was due to internal resources being focused on enabling services to be run whilst officers were working from home, as well as suppliers having staff furloughed.
2. This paper provides an update on the progress made since the projects resumed in May 2020, and look forward to other future projects.

Progress Update

3. The areas of focus for the New Normal projects has been People and Technology.

People Projects

4. A number of people related projects have been recently implemented all of which support the People Strategy and the people element of the New Normal Strategy.

4.1. Implementation of a new HR system (i-Trent)

The new HR system went live on Friday 26 June 2020. A number of virtual training sessions were delivered for both the Employee Self-Service and People Manager Self-Service areas of the system. So far, 119 managers have attended the people manager training and 64 people attended employee training. The overall feedback from officers has been very good as the system is very user friendly and the vast majority have not felt the need for training even though it was offered. Initially there were a number of queries on how the system dealt with annual leave but these were easily addressed.

The HR team is using the new system for reporting needs including using Business Objects (BO) for bespoke reports. The functionality for HR will increase as further modules go live.

4.2. Implementation of recruitment micro-site

A key outcome delivered during 2020 has been the implementation of the Council's new recruitment micro-site in January 2020. The recruitment micro-site was launched on the DBC internet site: - <https://www.dacorum.gov.uk/home/recruitment>. This website has rich content with a modern focus aimed at attracting people to work for the Council and explaining the benefits as well as what they can expect from working with us. This includes promotional videos shot in The Forum and across the Borough featuring our staff from a range of services across the organisation including frontline staff from the Cupid Green Depot.

4.3. Dacorum Apprenticeship and Graduate scheme

Following members support and investment as part of the budget setting cycle, during April 2019 to March 2020 we launched the new Dacorum apprenticeship and Graduate scheme. Fifteen people were enrolled an apprenticeship; eleven are employees who are upskilling in areas such as Finance and Planning, and in addition, we employed four new

apprentices in Human Resources, Finance and the Customer Services Unit.

In addition, a new apprentice was enrolled into ICT in April 2020, on a one year apprenticeship, and there are a further five employees due to start their formal training in September in Finance, Planning and Housing.

We employed under the Corporate Graduate scheme one graduate (who started October 2019). His first placement was with Housing and he is now on his second placement in Planning.

In addition a Graduate Environmental Health Officer started in the summer 2020, a law Graduate started in September 2020, a Planning graduate started in the summer 2020 and Housing is looking to recruit a graduate Housing surveyor shortly.

4.4. Coaching and mentoring scheme

A coaching and mentoring scheme has been developed which will be provided with support from West Herts College and will be available to all employees.

4.5. Future People projects

The HR team is planning the future implementation of further modules of the new HR system which include performance management, sickness recording and recruitment.

The team will also to launch a coaching and mentoring scheme following discussion and approval with the Council's new incoming Chief Executive.

The new Chief Executive will also review and develop the requirements for a refreshed leadership programme to fit with her strategic leadership direction for the next stage in the organisation's development. This will be prepared in consultation with staff and Corporate Management Team.

Technology Projects

5. A number of technology related projects have been delivered all of which support the aims and ways of working of the New Normal Strategy.

5.1. Robotic Process Automation (RPA) pilots

Four processes were automated as part of the pilot project. The RPA for scanning microfiche of historic housing records into Orchard and improving the indexing of documents in the corporate document management system Information@Work for Regulatory Services were successful.

Although the Finance processes were technically successful there was insufficient evidence of volume and throughput of transactions for a sustainable business case to take the project forward into the live environment.

However, the business case supporting the indexing robot identified numerous benefits including freeing around 1,250 hours per month of

officer time to do more valuable work. This is particularly important as Environmental Services have been exceptionally stretched due to the impact of the pandemic.

Since approval by the programme board i work is being undertaken with the Council's suppliers, T-Impact, to move this robot into the live environment. It is targeted to go live to support the Environmental Health team by the end of October.

Following discussions with Housing staff three further processes have been identified which could benefit from being automated. They relate to

- Loading new tenant information into the Inform system
- Identification and location of compliance documents in a shared drive
- Monitoring of common housing inbox and automatic routing of enquiries to relevant Housing Officers using the "patch document".

These processes will be further investigated and business cases developed to support their automation as more than one process can be loaded on the robot we have already secured for indexing Information@Work process.

5.2. Business Process Reengineering (BPR) pilots

The pilot projects looked in detail at two areas in the Council, the handling of Voids in Housing and mobile working for officers. Both project were severely impacted by the pandemic as not all of the workshops were completed before lockdown took place.

For Housing there was value in the entire team being involved in capturing the as-is process as it showed just how many different people are involved and made each group aware of their own role and those of others within the process. The "to-be process" was developed and many of the "quick wins" that were identified were implemented immediately, forming part of the approach of the Housing team in moving to working from home during lockdown. E.g. the use of key safes to remove the need to collect keys from The Forum.

Other improvements have been identified but these will take some time to achieve as they are dependent on changes to the technology used. It is currently difficult to identify the specific benefits from the improved process as there are now inherent delays due to the impact of Covid-19 secure guidelines when making property fit for re-let.

For remote working it was useful gathering the issues through a workshop that had representation from across all areas of the Council. It helped us to think about the types of hardware that would be useful to different types of user.

The follow-up work on this review was dropped very suddenly with immediate focus moving to ensuring the current environment was fully supported due to the reliance on technology through lockdown. With the position now more stable, a pilot is being developed to see how the use

of e-forms could help users in Regulatory Services to undertake inspections where paper forms are currently used. Time could potentially be saved from officers no longer having to enter that information into their systems when they are next in the office.

A business case will be taken to the programme board to establish the viability of any investment in the short term whilst the service seeks a replacement for the main system used in Regulatory Services, Civica APP (Flare), which is due to become unsupported in the next few years.

5.3. Future ICT Operating Model

A revised Technology Governance/Operating Model for ICT has been developed and the work to put this into effect will form part of the new ICT Service Plan.

Summary

6. Members of the Finance and Resources Overview Scrutiny Committee will note that there has been significant progress on a range of key projects contained within the New Normal programme despite the impact of the COVID pandemic on the work programme, which has resulted in the need to reprioritise of some work-streams to ensure that they provide the greatest benefit to the Council in due course.