

# Somerset Council – LGR and beyond

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**Somerset Council**





**Population** of 560,000 spread over several large market towns and villages (and the City of Wells), and rural areas

**Rural beauty** with four Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Exmoor National Park. But climate change a real threat

Home to **farming** and **food/drink manufacture**

**Engineering industry:** Hinkley Point C, Gravity Enterprise Zone, UK's only helicopter manufacturer

**Economically:** low skills, income and productivity compared to the rest of the country

**Demographics:** aging population, younger people often move away to study

**Local government:** a unitary council offers enormous opportunities to tackle challenges and take advantage of opportunities



# Preparedness for new unitary (1)

## (what the LGA said about us – December 2022)

- Sound programme management architecture with knowledgeable and engaged PMO – they know their stuff and there are impressive levels of programme rigour and governance. Need to pay attention to how this will transition effectively to the new leadership team so that they own tranche 2.
- Senior members feel engaged in the programme – they feel invested in the programme.
- Confident that vesting day will pass successfully and residents won't notice any difference to services, but there is a lot still to do and pace must be maintained – fixing the engine whilst running the car.
- Appointment of new CX has provided much needed direction and stability - the appointment process means the programme has been compressed but this seems to have been mitigated?
- Make sure you allocate enough time for stabilisation – this will be an extended period of change
- Have all members fully embraced the one council one voice ethos and are prepared to leave their district/county council badges behind?
- It is positive that real progress has been made with critical systems e.g. payroll, finance etc...

# Preparedness for new unitary (2)

## (what the LGA said about us – December 2022)

- Budget/ Finances – be clear on the accurate budget position going into 23/24 and how this will impact on deliverability and ambition
- Recognition that appointing tier 2 and 3 early in new year, which is later than planned and will consume your leadership capacity at a critical time
- Risks around bringing in new finance system for April 1 – ensure you have your risk mitigations in place
- “We don’t have the answers to everything ahead of day one, but we know what matters most”  
This seems a pragmatic approach.
- Third sector partners would welcome opportunities to co-produce design elements of the new authority beyond the LCNs and there are opportunities for more effective and meaningful engagement.
- Work and commitment of Programme Team is recognised and valued – but beware burnout!

# Critical Path Delivery

- The new Council Plan
- A new Constitution for Somerset Council
- Successfully delivered May 2022 Elections
- Approval of the New Organisation Structure for Tiers 1, 2 & 3
- Appointment of Senior Management in Tier 2 confirmed at Full Council
- Governance, geographies and operational arrangements for LCNs
- 2023/24 Revenue & Capital Budgets and MTFP approved by Council
- Capital Strategy For Somerset Council
- Digital, Data and Technology Strategies
- Single telephone number
- Website for new Council ready to go live
- Taunton Town Council in shadow form, ready to step up on Vesting Day with elections timetabled
- Single sets of housing policies and strategies agreed where required
- New branding and logo for the new Council
- Capita contract with Mendip District Council: exit plan under way
- Planning for stable BAU service delivery on Vesting Day
- Combined 5 Councils Strategic Risk Register
- Temporary Labour Contracts in place
- Partnership Strategy Framework
- Customer Service Strategy and Excellence Model
- Bringing all 5 council's ICT systems together (Mendip due weekend of 4-5 March)
- Pension fund arrangements for Somerset Council in place

# Our Customers

## What will our customers see Day 1?

- One telephone number  
0300 123 2224 [8.30- 5pm]
- One website [www.somerset.gov.uk](http://www.somerset.gov.uk)
- Customer promise/standards
- Single complaints policy
- 19 Customer Access points
- Single FOI/DSAR

## What will our customers hear and feel on Day 1?

- Natural Language Bot
- First point of contact triage
- No wrong door
- Empowered and trained staff ready to give the best customer service across unitary functions
- Increased accessibility to contact Council Services
- Smoother partnership interactions
- Nothing less than before
- Customers can continue to do business with the Council

## The ambition for a successful Day 1

- Customers access the services they want and get the support they need
  - Customers have a positive experience

## What will be different on Vesting Day?

- One Customer Service Team
- One Website
- One telephone number
- One Customer Strategy
- One Digital Strategy
- Integrated telephony system
- Natural Language BOT response to calls
- Skilled staff in unitary functions
- No wrong front door approach
- 19 Customer Access Points (7 new)
- Single approach to complaints/FOI/DSAR
- Ability to join a Customer Panel
- Digital Volunteers
- Combined My Waste Services
- No change to Out of Hours services
- Aligned distribution of Council Tax Bills, Business Rates Bills and Benefit notifications
- New branding for Somerset Council (phased roll out)
- Local Community Networks

# Our Staff and Members

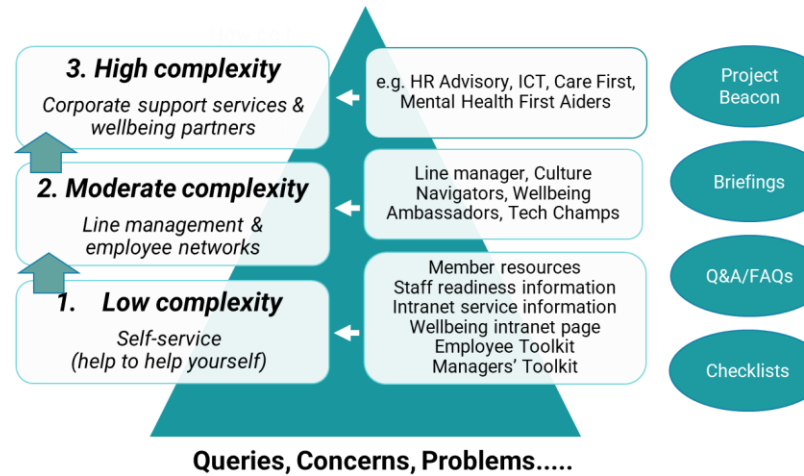
## What will our staff and members see on Day 1?

- Physical signs– new branding, ID cards, lanyards, lapel pins
- Digital signs– single platform and identity management, screensaver, intranet, Learning Management System
- Visible leadership – Senior leader engagement, Culture Navigators, CEO Statement

## What will our staff and members hear and feel on Day 1?

- Staff & Member readiness checklist (with guidance, FAQs, links to further support)
- Celebration of what has been achieved and focus on the exciting opportunities ahead
- Stability from minimal change
- Support by line manager, Culture Navigators, Tech Champs, Wellbeing ambassadors, employee support networks
- Wellbeing Programme to support all staff
- A checklist for managers with support
- Member induction & development programme
- Organisation wide collaboration enabled through single ICT platform

## Transition Support



## The ambition for a successful Day 1

- Staff and Members do their jobs, working well, staying safe
  - Staff and Members are positive ambassadors
    - Staff are uniting as one team
- Staff and Members have a positive experience

## What will be different on Vesting Day?

*For most staff, much will remain the same with exception of:*

- New Council intranet
- Access to shared online workspaces
- Access to more/different apps e.g. SAP
- New email signatures
- New directorates & transitional operating structure (interim for payroll purposes)
- Access to broader selection of benefits
- Access to a single ICT Helpdesk
- Access to other offices will be enabled where required

*For some staff there will be:*

- A different (interim) reporting line
- New ICT equipment (e.g. some Mendip staff)

# What about the cash savings?

New Savings Proposals identified as LGR enabled	2022/23 & 2023/24	2024/2025	2025/2026	Total
Subject to decision making	N/A	£2.4m	£1.6m	£4.0m
Already committed in the MTFP	£7.6m	£4.9m	£4.8m	£17.3m
Less unachievable savings	-£0.7m	-	-	-£0.7m
Total maximum potential LGR enabled savings delivery	£6.9m	£7.3m	£6.4m	£20.6m

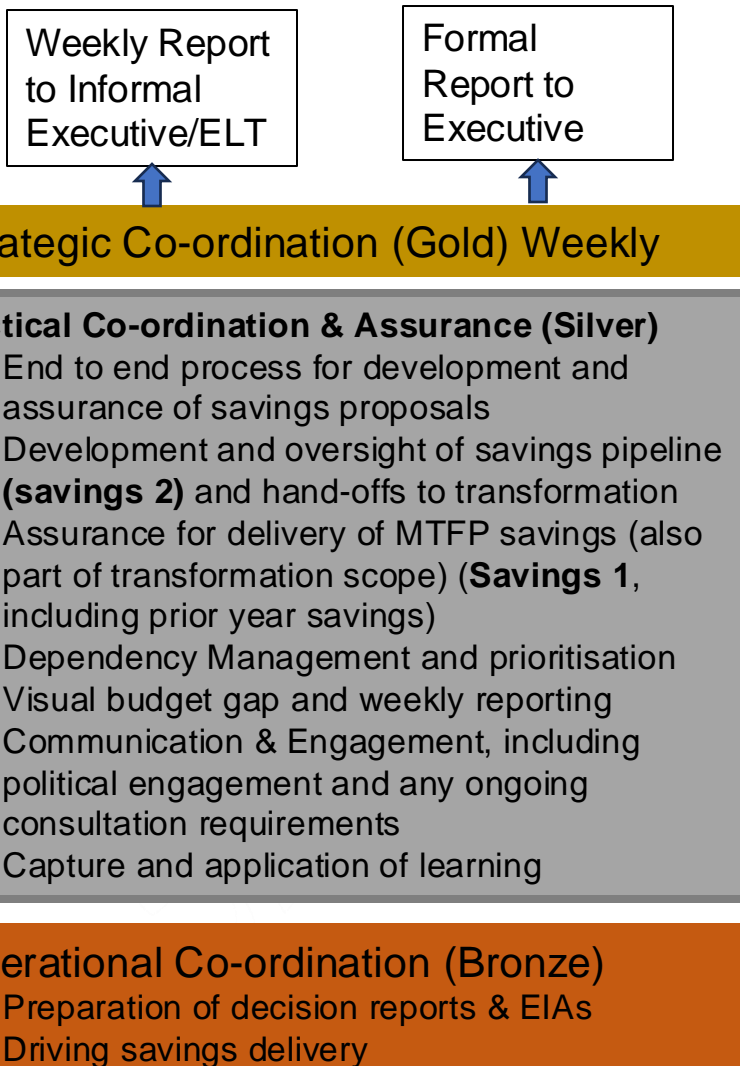
- Auditable record of benefits proved to be essential – independent review has been key
- Resource deployed to track and project manage delivery
- The transition from centralised delivery in LGR to service led delivery proved to be challenging

# A Budget Deficit – financial emergency

- Significant change in forecast spend for Adults and Children's
- Change in budget forecast to 24/25 gap of £100m (LGR would contribute £20m by the end of 25/26)
- Needed to pause restructuring to deploy resources to support financial emergency
- Transition phase of LGR proving not to be fast enough or deep enough to realise the level of savings required
- Lack of accountability in interim structure and poor data from legacy Councils making it time consuming to resolve budget issues
- Programme and project management resource deployed to support financial emergency – the right call but has wider consequences...
- Internal challenge failed us, we're too nice an organisation. We will bring in external peers to challenge us
- Regain the focus and control from LGR
- We are good in an emergency...

# Somerset Financial Emergency

## Phase 2 Governance



### Tactical Cells (Silver)

#### Finance Performance & Data Review – *closed early in phase 2 (moved to BAU)*

- Data quality and support to organisation to ratify budget positions and forecast outturn
- Financial capability – development of capability across all services including clear principles for ways of working

#### Asset Disposal

- Programme to dispose of the portfolio of commercial property investment assets
- acceleration of office rationalisation

#### DLUHC

- Engagement & preparation to enable access to exceptional finance support package, co-ordinating and leading activity to deliver the required Capitalisation Directive & S114 legal compliance

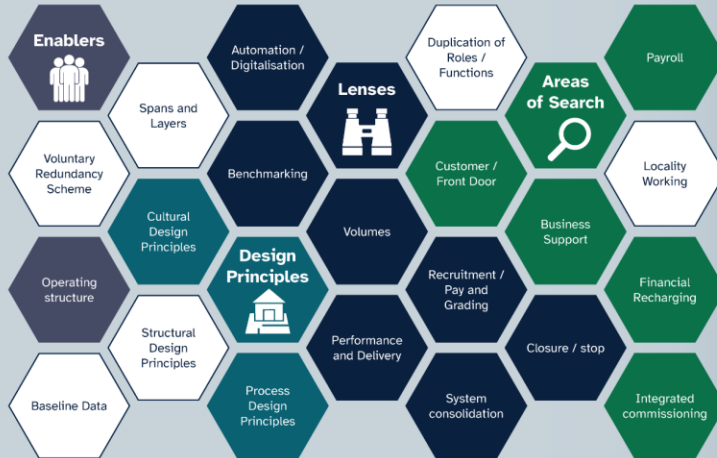
#### Transformation Board

- Programme Board and design authority for transformation, providing strategic direction and setting design standards and assuring delivery against these. Critical dependencies with Financial Emergency include financial benefits realisation relating to:
  - Workforce reshaping
  - Service Devolution
  - Achieving transformation programme outcomes e.g. MLMF, Children's.

# Organisational Redesign Overview



## Design Authority



## Workforce Reduction:

- Managed and controlled recruitment
- Establishment control
- Removal of budgeted vacancies where a post is not essential.
- Reduction of agency workers
- Reduction of interims and consultants
- Voluntary reduction of contract hours
- Review of Fixed Term Contracts
- Overtime, expenses and allowances
- Annual leave purchase scheme
- Voluntary redundancy



**Somerset Council**

## New Organisation & Service Design



### New Design



### Transformation Plan



### Road map for reducing pay bill



### Devolution delivery programme



### Saving delivery plan

## Service Directors



### Service blueprints

(adhering to structural design principles and linked to financial strategy):

- Closure / Stop
- Do less with less
- Restructure
- Redesign
- Alternative service delivery
- Income generation
- Risk areas (service recovery speed)



### LGR:

- Restructures – planning, finance, strategic asset management, partnerships & localities
- Service & system consolidation / transition



### MTFP:

- 23/24 saving delivery
- 24/25 saving delivery – transformation
- Devolution of services / TUPE
- 25/26 pipeline

# DRAFT Structural Principles



Service blueprints will be assessed against these structural principles to ensure adherence to overall design principles:

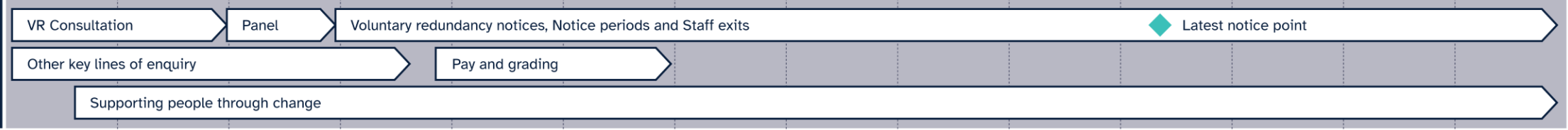
- ✓ within financial envelope
- ✓ clear lines of accountability and responsibility
- ✓ spans and layers of control for new structures designed within agreed parameters
- ✓ outcome / purpose focussed (horizontally rather than vertically)
- ✓ any corporate or cross-cutting roles and functions centralised
- ✓ shared services, roles and skills to reduce cost and/or generate income
- ✓ jointly resourced roles and functions with partners with shared outcomes
- ✓ high volume repetitive tasks / functions replaced with automation
- ✓ identification of opportunities for outsourcing / devolution where this will deliver better outcomes
- ✓ prevention focussed roles and functions
- ✓ channel shift to digital first

Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March
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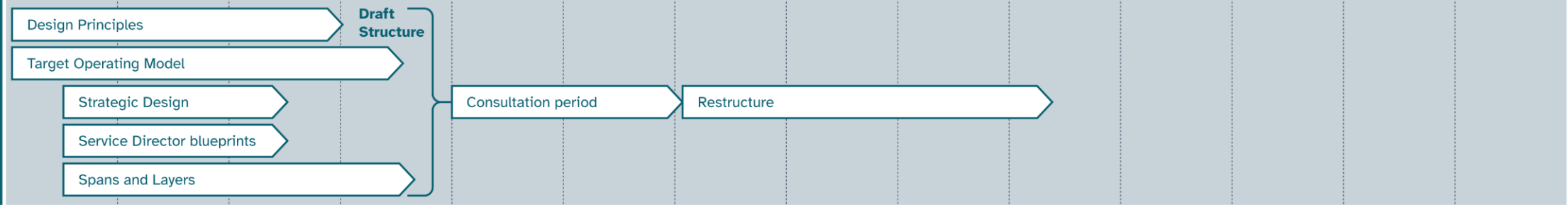
Key dates:

- Scrutiny
- Executive
- Executive
- Full Council VR Decisions >£100k
- Peer Review

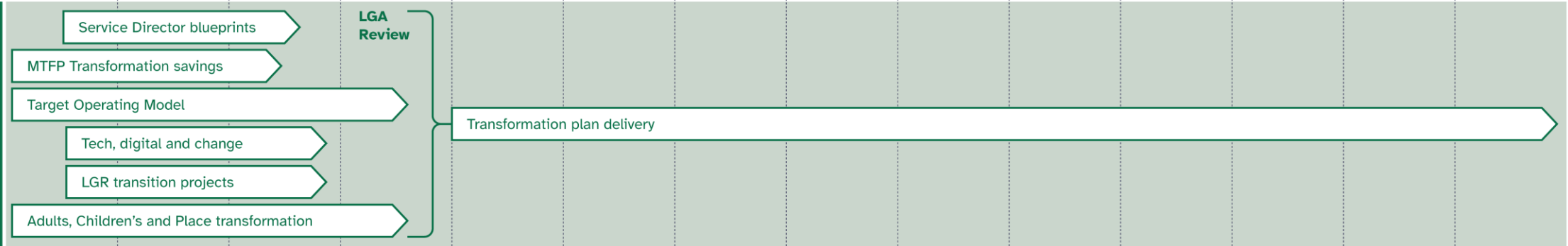
**Workforce / Pay bill reduction roadmap**



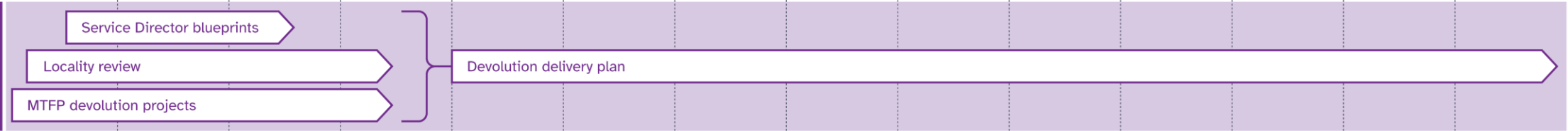
**New Design**



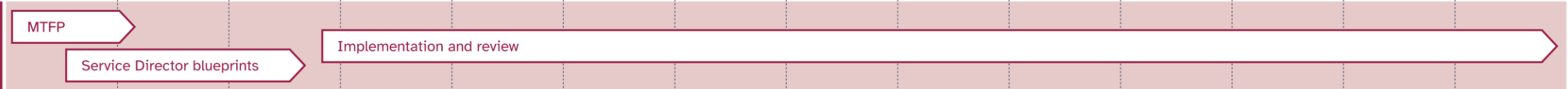
**Transformation Plan**



**Devolution delivery plan**



**Savings delivery plan**



# So what did we learn?

- Finances will knock any transformation off track so embed it in the programme
  - LGR only went so far, a Council wide transformation is the only way to address the financial circumstances
  - Keeping track of benefits has proved to be essential
  - Focus on the big-ticket items
  - Data, data and more data
  - Invite external challenge at every opportunity
  - The importance of honesty about what transformation will bring
  - Incremental decisions are the only way to keep pace, organisation can't handle a single big decision
  - The need for a clear vision and a view on what this means for service delivery
- 