Wiltshire Council

Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

27 November 2024

Final Report of the Transformation Programme Task Group

Purpose of the report

1. To present the findings and recommendations of the Transformation Programme Task Group for endorsement by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Background

2. Following a presentation on the council's transformation service to Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee, 15 November 2023, the committee resolved to explore the potential for scrutiny of the transformation programme and set up a task group to consider how this could best be achieved. The Committee had noted the benefits scrutiny had brought to the development of individual transformation projects as evidenced by the Evolve Task Group and wanted the new task group to explore scrutiny of the transformation programme itself and to make recommendations for the committee to review.

Terms of reference

3. The following terms of reference for the task group were endorsed by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on 29 May 2024:

   To explore and make recommendations on how to conduct effective scrutiny of the council's Transformation Programme, which should include scrutiny of the:

   a. Selection of transformation projects (decision making criteria and process).
   b. Governance and oversight.
   c. Delivery of business plan objectives and outcomes for residents.
   d. Evaluation of success and learning from experience.

Membership

4. The task group comprised the following membership:

   Cllr Clare Cape
   Cllr Ruth Hopkinson
   Cllr Jon Hubbard
   Cllr Christopher Williams (Chair)
   Cllr Graham Wright

Methodology

5.   The task group met on four occasions and is grateful to the following council officers for providing written and verbal evidence: Stuart Honeyball, Director Business Transformation, Kate Beckinsale-Smith, Service Delivery Manager Transformation and Andy Brown, former Deputy Chief Executive and Corporate Director Resources.

6.   The task group identified that there was no cabinet member with specific responsibility for transformation to engage with this scrutiny. This is addressed in the main body of the report.

7.   The task group received the following information as evidence.

   - Terms of Reference for the Transformation Planning Group and the Transformation Board.
   - Sample agendas and reports from both groups to give insight into the work of the groups.
   - Documentation relating to project selection and prioritisation (before and after review)
   - Presentations and briefing notes on the transformation process, evaluation and plans for future reporting.
   - Snapshots from the transformation SharePoint site to give an overview of the systems in place for management and governance. It was made clear that additional information could be provided should the task group want to focus in more detail on any part of the process.

Evidence

Governance and Oversight

8.   The Transformation and Business Change Directorate was created in 2022 primarily to support the delivery of the Council's Business Plan 2022-32 on the basis that a transformation of existing services was needed to achieve the outcomes of the plan.

9.   According to the Directorate, 'The governance approach for the programme was to provide consistent organisational-level prioritisation and oversight of transformation activities against organisational priorities as set out in the business plan'.

10. Oversight of the programme sits with the Transformation Board, which is made up of director-level officers, i.e. the CEO, Corporate Directors of People, Resources and Place and Directors of Legal and Governance, HR and OD, Transformation and Adult Social Care. There is no Cabinet representative on the Board.

11. There is Cabinet oversight of individual transformation projects with cabinet members sitting on the project boards of large transformation programmes within their remit.

12. Cabinet has financial oversight as it has ultimate approval for spend from the transformation reserve.

13. One option for future scrutiny of transformation considered by the task group was to have a representative from OSMC on the Transformation Board. However, it concluded that this approach wouldn't work without a cabinet member with responsibility for the transformation programme on the board to be held accountable.

14. As the transformation programme has a key role in supporting the delivery of the Council's business objectives, the task group thought it would be appropriate to have a cabinet lead with overall responsibility.

15. While it was considered that the Leader may, by default, hold that overall responsibility, the task group wanted to see that role and accountability explicitly designated within the list of cabinet member portfolios.

16. The governance framework for the programme would, it was felt, be strengthened by having a cabinet member responsible for the portfolio of transformation projects, providing political, strategic direction for the programme.

17. Another significant advantage of programme-wide management is that it would support learning from projects, transferring what had been learned into future transformation projects. This would also enhance decision-making around prioritisation between projects, compare value for money, including social benefit, and have good visibility of the combined/shared outcomes of more than one project.

Evaluation and Impact

18. The task group wanted to understand how the delivery of transformation projects was assessed against project and business plan objectives.

19. A briefing note prepared for the task group addressed the current approach to evaluation. It stated that, 'the reporting of progress on transformation programmes is currently undertaken on a discrete, per-programme basis based on the programme status, key risks and issues and progress of key tasks. The assessments are carried out by the programme lead and/or Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) without reference to, or comparison with, other programmes.' Good practice would be to set up a 'portfolio management' approach to reporting risks and issues, milestones, outcomes and benefits across all projects/programmes within Transformation.'

20. The transformation team were 'developing an automated and consolidated approach to make summary reporting of programmes more consistent, quicker to produce and reusable.'

21. The task group was shown an example of the new reporting 'dashboard' to illustrate how transformation would be reporting progress against objectives. With Board approval, officers anticipated that they would be reporting with this new format in three months (late 2024 or early 2025).

22. Reviewing the draft report, it was not clear to the task group how outcomes, benefits, narratives, and key milestones would be reported. Officers responded that this information would be captured within the 'month key risks' section of the report.

23. To enable strategic programme-level scrutiny, the task group considered it appropriate for the monitoring report described above to be received by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee and scheduled into its forward work plan as a regular item. The task group suggested there may be a benefit in receiving the report at the same time as the finance and performance report to support linkages between the two.

24. The task group believed there would be advantages in the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee having some oversight or input into the transformation report during its development to help ensure that the report was accessible and provided data that enabled effective scrutiny of the programme.

25. The task group expected to see a system in place to support the management and evaluation of the benefits of transformation at project and programme level. Put simply, if a service had been transformed in order to address an identified issue or problem, how would we know if or when it had worked?

26. Officers reflected that the focus of the programme had been on completion, getting a service or resource up and running. The challenge of capturing longer term benefits was acknowledged. Nonetheless, the task group felt there would be significant advantages in having indicators in place to capture the improvement or change following transformation activity. Not only would it support learning of what had or had not worked but it would make it easier to communicate the benefits of investment to the public and thereby improve transparency. The task group recognises that this approach is likely to require new skills, such as a consistent use of methodology for change or improvement and potentially a shift in mind-set. It was noted that the appointment of a director of transformation has been the first step towards achieving this.

Transformation Process

27. The task group were provided with an overview of the stages in the transformation programme and the roles of the transformation team, the transformation planning group and the transformation board.

28. A recent review, carried out by the transformation team, had resulted in greater automation and a system for prioritisation, leading hopefully to a more streamlined and consistent way of selecting and initiating projects for transformation.

29. The task group questioned at what point in the transformation programme, scrutiny should take place and concluded that ongoing scrutiny of transformation should cover the transformation process from start to finish. The performance report (see para 21-24), currently under development, would include

    a) selection (because having sight of newly selected projects would enable OSMC to determine whether any project would benefit from project-focused scrutiny, like the Evolve task group).
    b) a review of performance of all projects.
    c) programme closure.

30. The Transformation team were keen to encourage people to come forward with ideas for transformation projects and a perceived benefit of the recent changes was to simplify the process through which officers can apply for a transformation idea to be taken forward. The task group felt that the criteria for selection (e.g. problem to solve, strategic alignment, costs and benefits, value for money, risks, and issues) should be clearly set out to assist the progress of the application through the approvals process.

31. The task group raised the possibility of non-executive members and members of the public being able to engage with transformation. Officers reflected that it was something that could be considered although there was more scope for member engagement than public engagement.

Conclusions

32. The Transformation Programme has a pivotal role in ensuring the successful delivery of the Council's business plan.

33. Political oversight of transformation is currently focused at project level yet a directorate of such significance would benefit from having a cabinet member with oversight of the whole transformation programme.

34. It would be fitting for there to be scrutiny of overall transformation activity at Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee. For this scrutiny to be effective and for accountability to be clear, there would need to be a cabinet member accountable for the programme.

35. There has been effective scrutiny of transformation at project level, as evidenced by the Evolve Task Group, and it is envisaged that similar task groups could support significant transformation projects in the future.

36. Evaluation has been carried out at a project level. There are plans to develop this approach to have a consistent methodology for reporting progress of projects. Building on this, there would be merit in reporting progress against overarching strategic objectives, as laid out in the business plan, as well as project objectives.

37. Introducing an evaluation of impact at project and programme level would encourage learning and a narrative to explain changes to services and the benefits of change.

38. Noting the interest of the Transformation team in being accessible to encourage proposals for projects coming forward, there could be scope for engagement with members and the public around transformation.

Proposal

39. To endorse the report of the Task Group and, in the absence of a cabinet member with overall responsibility for transformation, refer it to the Leader of the Council for response at the Committee's next meeting.

Recommendations

1   **That Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee receive a quarterly report on the Transformation Programme to include any new projects selected, the performance of all ongoing projects and the closure of any projects.**

2   **The focus of scrutiny to be the impact of transformation on services for residents and the achievement of the business objectives of the Council.**

3   **That input from Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee should be invited when developing the transformation programme performance report to ensure that it supports effective scrutiny from elected members.**

4   **That political responsibility for overseeing the council's Transformation Programme be explicitly included within a cabinet member portfolio.**

5   **That consideration is given to wider engagement with elected members to encourage both greater awareness of the programme and proposals for projects and, where appropriate, engage with the public in the evaluation of the benefits of transformation projects.**

Cllr Christopher Williams, Chairman of the Transformation Task Group

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Appendices

None