

Future Council: Roadmap Bulletin 1

This is the first of a series of bulletins to keep you informed about the programme of work we will be doing together over the next 12 months that will lead us towards the future shape and role of the council.

This initial bulletin will follow the approach we set out in our Managing Change Framework "[Step Change](#)" and in our [change pledge](#)

Why do we need further change?

There are three key drivers.

1. The government is significantly reforming local government in terms of:

- The Localism Bill
- Planning policy
- Housing supply
- Housing & Council tax benefits
- Opening up competition for public services
- Local government finance

We need to plan for the impact of these imminent changes, which requires council services to be even more adaptable, responsive and cost efficient.

2. We have to make significant savings over the next few years - £5 million overall by 2014/15. This is because of government grant reductions and financial pressures on the council. Although we have already identified, and are on our way to achieving, over half of this amount through service prioritisation, we do need to find ways to save around an additional £2 million. We are currently using our reserves to ease the timing of the reductions necessary but relying on these will not solve the problem as the reserves will eventually run out.

3. We know that our ICT service needs to improve dramatically both to help us with our work now and to support our future plans. Ensuring our ICT service is fully functional and responsive to the needs of the rest of the organisation is a top priority and an essential building block to delivering all the other changes we have planned.

Leadership Team will oversee the change programme to ensure the planning, communication and implementation is carried out effectively.

What is the Future Council Roadmap about?

We want to create a bold, fair, inclusive new council that acts with integrity, responds to our customers and service users well, providing improved, joined up, locally delivered services at a reduced overall cost. This means that our services will need to be re-designed.

Cabinet at its meeting of 6 June 2011 approved the Future Council Roadmap as part of the Corporate Plan. Its key features are:

- reviewing the role of Leadership Team and prepare the ground for the senior management changes in 2012/13 (particularly how the Team will work without the current Executive Director roles);
- discussions with Portfolio Holders and Group Leaders to examine the options around the type of council we want to be as these changes emerge;

- engagement with Extended Leadership Team (ELT), Managers Forum and all staff through all staff briefings on the issues, solutions and choices; [see here](#) for a policy paper describing the context and council ambitions;
- the preparation of 'outline business cases' for October/November 2011 setting out an evaluation of service redesign options to deliver the savings – see further below;
- changes to the council's shape and role would then be implemented between April 2012 and 31 March 2014.

Redesigning Council Services – what does this involve?

Leadership Team's view is that a further round of service prioritisation based on the existing structures is not sustainable given the difficulties in identifying the £3million level of savings to date and the scale of the forthcoming challenge to come. A more radical approach is needed to achieve a further £2million saving.

As referred to above, Leadership Team has just commissioned the following work to assess service delivery options:

- (1) Following an external review of the **ICT infrastructure and service**, the Head of ICT (Avni Patel) is carrying out an options appraisal for the future delivery of the IT service. This options appraisal will cover the scope for:
 - a public sector partnership such as a third authority to deliver the service;
 - a multi-sourcing model – mix of outsourcing of some services and appropriate services delivered in house;
 - full private sector outsourcing with a client contractor management function in house

This options appraisal started in August and the target date for completion and where required, handover to a new provider is October 2012. All of this is subject to the viability and cost of the alternatives and formal staff consultation that will take place in due course.

In the interim the key infrastructure improvements to stabilise the performance of the system are being implemented as quickly as possible through the replacement of the Storage Area Network (SAN) and thin client servers.

- (2) **Customer Insight Project** – to gauge what our customers and service users want so that it informs how we shape service redesign. Objectives are firstly to understand better what our customers have been saying through the various survey instruments, Mosaic, Lagan, Govmetric etc and from service reviews, consultation exercises etc.

Secondly to use this to redesign services in a way that responds to these requirements which we think, currently, will point towards increasing 'self-serve' and resolving as much of the customer issues as possible at the first point of contact. It will link in with the existing work of the Corporate Process Improvement Programme.

Kathryn Robson is leading on this work and it aims to be complete by the end of September.

- (3) **Future shape of the council**

We intend to look at the way we deliver all our services. The outcome of the Roadmap is likely to be a smaller council overall, which will, inevitably, impact across all service areas – for example, those services that support our larger, frontline services would need to re-size in response to any changes to these services and the impact of joining services up better could also involve a wide range of services.

In the next phase, work has been commissioned to develop service delivery options for:

- Buildings and Projects
- Grounds maintenance
- Property
- Street cleansing
- Waste & recycling

These are the areas where there is a developed market and potentially different forms of service delivery could generate savings. The options could include:

- 1) In-house delivery based on new requirements
- 2) a mix of in-house and externalised
- 3) a completely externalised service

These teams will have received a full briefing. Staff will be involved in the working groups developing the options and consultation with Unison will begin on 14 September 2011. Our change pledge commits to providing adequate resources to help us manage change well and we are, where necessary, procuring external support to help with the workloads and provide expertise.

Our four non-shared heads of service, led by Executive Director, Cate Hall, will pull this work together for initial discussions with elected members in October 2011 and further discussions in January through to March 2012. The options for joining up remaining services together will also, where appropriate, be considered as part of this work.

(4) **Property Review**

As a council, we are fortunate to own a considerable amount of property and open space across the borough. This brings in significant income each year and so is an important part of planning our future finances.

A review of our property assets is underway to confirm which sites we wish to continue to hold for investment and operational purposes and which we could dispose of in the medium term (2014-2018).

This will identify opportunities for growth, redevelopment, transfer of assets to the third sector (which includes voluntary and community organisations) or alternative providers and to generate capital for future capital programmes.

Carol Chen (Head of Legal and Property) is leading this work and Leadership Team has agreed:

- (a) a review of operational depots (led by Head of Environmental Services - Alan Gough - with team members from Community Services, Property, Planning, Buildings & Projects and Finance)
- (b) a review of council owned garages and car parks (led by Carol Chen with team members from Property, Planning and Finance)
- (c) a site allocations assessment to review our hostel provision for homeless families (led by Head of Community Services - Lesley Palumbo - with team members from Planning, Property, Building & Projects and Finance)
- (d) a review of third sector properties and landlord/tenant obligations (lead to be determined).

All the above (a) – (d) will feed initially into a discussion with elected members in October/November for a policy steer.

We are also seeking to strengthen the Legal Team with an additional Property Solicitor to support this work and other big schemes such as Charter Place. This will save us money by reducing the cost of external fees.

Although these areas of work have been identified as part of the Roadmap programme, there is a great deal of other work being done across the organisation to help us achieve both our savings goal and our vision for the Future Council. Whilst the above highlights some of the more substantial areas of work we need to progress, we will still be keeping an eye on delivering day to day improvements to our services areas to help secure additional savings and better value for money services.

Shared Services

I know a number of you have been asking about the future of shared services in terms of whether there will be a move to do more shared working, particularly with Three Rivers District Council. At this stage, we are not looking to add significantly to our current shared services model whilst we are still embedding the existing four. The Three Rivers DC and Watford BC management teams are meeting together every two months to improve joint working and planning but at this stage, members in both authorities are in agreement that a shared Chief Executive / Managing Director and heads of service arrangement is not something to be pursued currently.

This is not to say that we won't consider further shared services or what is known as a 'lead authority' model (one authority providing a service on behalf of others) as and when appropriate (for example for Legal Services) but at this stage there is nothing more definite on the horizon.

How can you get involved and influence?

I know this has been a lengthy first bulletin and that there is a lot of information in it that you and your teams will need to take in but I feel it is better to communicate what is happening as fully as possible. This bulletin will be supported by departmental briefings so that staff can discuss, raise questions, make proposals and feedback.

A special section on the intranet – [Roadmap – Future Council](#) is being developed – post your questions and you'll receive an answer within 2 working days. In addition a standard set of frequently asked questions will be drawn up and roadmap bulletins/briefings and relevant papers will be located there. This will be up and running for 9 September.

Please let me know if you have any views on how best to engage with staff throughout the process and I would welcome your comments on any of the above. Through management forums and ELT we have also captured many ideas and areas for improvement – please continue to feed these through the Managing Change group, or your line manager or direct to me or Kathryn Robson.

We have already published the [feedback](#) on the lessons learned from Service Prioritisation and we intend to embed improvements into the roadmap process.

Manny Lewis
Managing Director