



Transforming Leicestershire

Building for the future: **David Parsons**, the Leader of Leicestershire County Council, discuss Leicestershire's holistic approach to business transformation



At Leicestershire County Council, we have been working to improve our services for many years, and recently achieved a four-star CPA rating. However the landscape of local government is changing and we needed to address the transformation in our service delivery that both government and our customers required. This meant we had to take a fresh look at how we tackled the widespread change needed to deliver those improvements.

We had a range of competing priorities to consider – electronic service delivery, shared services, priority outcomes, efficiency savings and legislative changes for children's services, adult social care and education – and this had created a vast number of projects and initiatives across the council. The result was overloading our staff. It made it difficult for us to balance the transformation we wanted to make with the operational day-to-day delivery of excellent services, and we were missing opportunities by not joining up projects.

So to refocus our resources and maximise the benefits from transformation, we needed to prioritise what was important, and to put in place a programme of carefully linked and controlled change that was closely integrated to the day-to-day delivery of services.

The first move that our Chief Executive, John Sinnott, made was to appoint Tony Harrop, our Director of Corporate Management, as Strategic Programme Director. His brief was to oversee our holistic change programme and he is supported by a clear governance structure comprising chief officers and members. We then commissioned a review of our existing project activity which identified 79 strategic projects and numerous departmental initiatives.

The key finding was that senior managers and staff were being overstretched, trying to manage and deliver against project objectives on top of service pressures. It also revealed that some projects were poorly defined and many others were struggling to deliver the outputs expected, given existing time and budget constraints.

The Corporate Management Team led the process of defining and challenging the Council's priorities with the aim of targeting our resources on fewer change projects. We have now significantly reduced the number of active projects, and linked all project activity into a strategic programme which reflects and delivers the Council's new priorities.

There are four key parts to the programme:

- Customer First – focuses on transforming customer service processes to be more accessible and flexible. This requires an efficient corporate infrastructure, aiming to provide customer self-service and mediated access via the Customer Service Centre to Council's services, including multi-agency service shops across the county;

- Organisational Efficiency – aims to deliver significant cashable savings through strategic procurement, a new approach to asset management, and shared services. Waste Management is also included as we want to avoid the potentially massive financial burden that could result from non-compliance with EU waste legislation;
- People & Performance – will create an employment environment and organisational culture that recruits, develops, rewards and retains the right people with the right skills to deliver excellent services to meet the needs of the citizens of Leicestershire now and in the future;
- Children's and Adults' Services Organisation – focuses on the integration of Children's services, including the implementation of a new approach to commissioning, and the transition to an Adult Social Care Department.

To manage day to day activities across this wide-ranging programme, we have set up our new Change Management Unit (CMU), led by

the Strategic Programme Manager. The CMU provides project and programme management guidance and quality assurance and monitors the delivery of benefits across the programme. It also provides communications assistance, manages the programme budget, and plans the provision of specialist expertise such as ICT, legal, HR, and property. The primary role of CMU is to ensure that the components of the programme deliver the benefits expected, and that the programme is flexible enough to respond to changing demands and priorities.

Finally, we recognise that the success of our vision and the transformation programme as a whole depends on the involvement, belief and engagement of all our staff. We are proud of the way our people at Leicestershire County Council have so far rallied to the cause and we feel that over the next three years we can achieve the goals we have set ourselves through open leadership and active management by the Cabinet and Corporate Management Team. ■

David Parsons Leader of Leicestershire County Council