

EDDC's Transformation Strategy 2019-2029

Introduction

Councils continue to face a tough and complex set of pressures including cuts in funding, rising demand and expectations for services and challenges in economic growth.

Following the Government's austerity programme and successive cuts to government grants, local authorities have looked beyond budget reduction and efficiency savings to strengthen their efforts to transform the way they work and to commercialise their services.

If there is a 'no-deal' Brexit there is of course the possibility of further funding reductions and budgetary pressures.

Over the last 5 years, East Devon District Council has responded well to these challenges and has successfully balanced its budget without the need to cut front line services.

Our Transformation Strategy has helped the Council develop its mind-set and culture away from a cuts, cuts, cuts mentality towards an innovative and commercial approach which will help ensure we exploit opportunities to deliver a balanced budget. The themes in this strategy underpin thinking at every level of service planning and have become integral to our budgeting and decision making process.

Despite our success to date, in 2020/21, the Council faces annual costs which exceed income by approximately £1.9 million.

This refreshed Transformation Strategy identifies key areas of income and efficiency savings which are underpinned by our key strategic transformational themes to ensure that we are doing everything we can to mitigate the budgetary shortfall.

What does transforming mean for East Devon District Council?

East Devon District Council's purpose is to be a successful district council delivering or commissioning the services our council tax payers expect despite the huge reductions in grants.

Our Transformation Strategy sits alongside our Council Plan and outlines how transforming the way we work will deliver our purpose despite the budget gap.

The Strategy is designed to help the organisation unify strategies, policies and people around common thinking to help navigate the financial difficulties affecting all local authorities.

It is designed to take us beyond the annual budgetary debate of statutory versus discretionary services to a sustainable operating model.

It is intended that this is a dynamic (rather than static) strategy. The action plan is reviewed and updated on at least an annual basis so that we can track progress and track any savings made.

It's important that we remember that transformation is not about moving from one steady state to another; neither is it a discrete programme that is started and finished. Instead, transformation is about an ongoing and continuous process of change requiring constant refreshing.

Strategic themes

The following 'strategic themes' make up our Transformation Strategy. These have updated to include research from Grant Thornton – Transformation in Localities 2018'.

- 1) **WorkSmart**
- 2) **Digital by design for a Digital East Devon**
- 3) **Systems thinking reviews with a digital mind-set**
- 4) **An organisational 'fit for purpose'**
- 5) **Commercial thinking to maximise income generation**
- 6) **Actively pursue partnership working and alternative delivery models where it makes sense to do so**
- 7) **Adopt place based approaches to grow local economies.**

The 'strategic themes' in this Transformation Strategy will be used to ensure that spending and savings proposals can be tested on an ongoing basis against pre-agreed criteria.

Keeping these strategic themes in mind will help everyone keep a firm focus on how the Council directs human and financial resources **towards a sustainable operating model**; steering a steady course to deliver our Council Plan priorities despite the reductions in government funding.

Key 'strategic themes' for transformation

1 WorkSmart

Following a comprehensive change programme, our WorkSmart is now truly embedded in EDDC. This approach outlines how working smarter means that we continue to challenge all the assumptions of traditional ways of working and bring in new approaches to management and team work.

Our WorkSmart approach is underpinned with the right technology at the right time, supported by new HR policies and important principles of flexibility, simplicity and empowerment.

Working smarter depends on moving towards a digital working environment so anywhere that work is carried out is effectively part of 'the office'. Working in partnership with Strata we have delivered or are working towards common systems, processes and tools so staff can access these wherever they are working. The process ensuring that the right tools are available to our staff will continue to evolve as technology moves on.

The Council now operates some 120 different working patterns and officers adopt different working styles (fixed office, flexible, mobile) balancing the needs of the individual, the task, the team and the customers.

Key actions	Owner	Time-scale	Comments
Continue to implement and review WorkSmart policies and principles through relocation	KJ	January 2019	
Support people managers to implement WorkSmart through workshops	KJ	Scheduled for October 2018	
Ensure technology is developed to support WorkSmart aims and principles	KJ / SMT	There are a number of related projects ongoing and these form part of Strata Project Update reports.	This includes all projects to support WorkSmart such as delivery of a new intranet and a new Document Management System for Planning, Environmental Health and Building Control.

Review and withdraw essential user allowances on a phased basis	KJ	2019/20 = £56k 20/21 = 22K	Total saving £162k
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2 Digital by design to become Digital East Devon

Our customers want to do business with us in ways and at times that suit them best. In the 21st century, people expect to be able to transact and self-serve on-line if they want to.

In March 2019, the Council will commence a project to implement Firmstep which is a digital platform. This technology will provide a digital platform which means customers sign on and have an account with the Council; transactions are integrated with back office systems. The customer portal will allow us to capture customer data across all channels and we will achieve a single customer view.

We have developed a Digital Strategy which articulates our digital ambition to become Digital East Devon; a digital council which makes the best use of the opportunities offered by the ever-changing world of technology and to ensure that our mind-set and culture are 'digital by design'.

By making East Devon **digital by design**, we can provide efficient, cost effective services to a growing majority of residents. By designing and commissioning systems which are simpler to use and provide a good customer experience, the aim is to raise residents' confidence to the point where **digital is their first choice**.

Becoming a **Digital East Devon** means that wherever possible, we'll take advantage of new tools and techniques to design and develop services focused on the customer.

The aims of our Digital Strategy are to:

- Set the scene for East Devon District Council and partners for the future direction of digital services, infrastructure and innovation.
- To be an over-arching document that gives a clear direction of where the Council, working alongside Strata Service Solutions Ltd and our partners, wants to be in the next three years – recognising that we will continually adapt and evolve to keep up-to-date with the latest advances in digital technologies.
- To focus our limited financial and people resources on achieving the best digital outcomes across the whole Council, the district and beyond.
- To address the growing demand for digital services and focus on what residents want in order to deliver outcomes that matter to them.
- To enable the Council, residents, businesses and partners to get the most out of digital.

Key actions	Owner	Time-scale	Comments / savings anticipated
Agree our Digital Strategy and related action plan.	KJ	October 2018	
Develop Project Initiation Document for Firmstep in partnership with Strata.	KJ	March 2019	
Sign up to the Local Digital Declaration.	KJ	October 2018	This is a joint initiative between Government Digital Services, Ministry of Housing and Local Government.
Implement NetCall for CSC	SD	TBC	2.3 year payback on implementation cost. £21k saving from 20/21
Reduction in print & post in Planning	EF	2019/20 2020/21	£7k £8k
Implementation of ModernGov	HGL	2018/19	TBC
StreetScene – autonomous mowers	AH	TBC	£40k investment trial. Potential £30k saving 20/21.

3 Systems thinking reviews across all services with a digital mind-set

We strive for services which are:

- organised around ‘what matters’ to our customers and communities
- designed to catch problems early
- delivered according to need and in the most appropriate way
- value for money

The Council has achieved significantly improved performance in areas where systems thinking reviews have taken place. However, there are still areas where we need to implement these reviews.

Further systems thinking reviews will determine what is the **purpose** of the service in customer terms; what **demands** customers place on the services and **what matters** to them; how capable are the various systems in responding to demand and what are the key system conditions impacting the work and how the work flows.

Research and experience in systems thinking councils shows that earlier intervention by public agencies could result in less intensive involvement being required later. Where possible, services should prioritise and build-in action which has the effect of reducing demand for and cost of services in the longer run. Addressing the ‘waste

demand' that results from focussing on consequences rather than causes, and approaches which alienate or disempower service users has a high cost for society and high costs for public services. The principles of preventative spend and early intervention are therefore identified as a strategic imperative.

Key actions	Owner	Time-scale	Comments/savings anticipated
Review and update Systems Thinking Plan in conjunction with SWAP key findings.	KJ	January 2019	
Arrange further training courses to ensure new managers are trained in this thinking and approach.	KJ	February 2019	
Use Systems thinking to implement a new Council Tax Reduction scheme	LJ	20/21	£60k 20/21 and £30k in 21/22

4 An organisation which is 'fit for purpose'

Our authority to recruit approach continues to ensure that each new or existing post and its business case is reviewed at East Devon.

Our digital ambitions will support us in developing a digital skilled workforce able to deliver more services digitally so that we will experience a growing majority of our customers choosing to transact with us online.

As our processes become more sophisticated and we are able to automate more we will continually review the structure and skills in our workforce.

Our ability to make decisions and improve our online services will be enhanced through better data about demand and customer behaviour.

Key actions	Owner	Time-scale	Comments/ savings anticipated
Continue to operate a vacancy management approach with clear business cases to support any recruitment. This approach will include ensuring that digital and systems thinking approaches have been exploited.	SMT	Ongoing	

Undertake a formal review of the organisational structure	Chief Executive/ SMT	Review and restructure by 20/21	Overall Target £250k staff savings for 2019/20 and 2020/21.
Re-grading posts to appropriate grade following changing nature of the work in Revenues and Benefits	LJ	TBC	£3k
Property and Estates restructure	TC	From 19/20	£3k
Part time income and payments post – FTC	SD	Not extended from 20/21	£16k
Structure review for East Devon Business Centre & Economic Development admin	AH	2019/20	£28k
Peer review	Chief Executive	Autumn 2019	This review will help ensure resources are being allocated to priorities appropriately.

5 Commercial thinking to maximise income generation

Maximising the value of our assets and developing a commercial mind-set is integral to our aim of mitigating our budget position and delivering sustainable services. As always the Council needs to balance best value and community benefit.

Key actions	Owner	Time-scale	Comments / savings anticipated
Draft a report for Cabinet regarding development of a charge for recycling and waste containers	AH	2019/20	£28k
Potential to increase event income for existing assets	AH & JG	2019/20 2020/21 2021/22 2022/23 2023/24	£15k £10k £30k £20k £20k
Review use of PV array on council assets	TC	2019/20	TCB
Continued maximisation of income in Revenues and Benefits	LJ	2020/21	£100k
Review CCTV provision	RC	2019/20	TBC

Expansion of Homesafeguard Service	JG	2020/21	£50k
Countryside to continue to work with private sector to manage sites to meet developer obligations	CP	2019/20	TBC
East Devon Business Centre – now full occupancy; remodelling to maximise space / income	TC	2019/20	£10k
Consider extension of handyman service to private sector	JG	2020/21	£20k
Rent reviews for commercial properties to ensure these are up to date	TC	2019/20	£15k
Review assets in terms of performance/value	SMT	2020/21 2021/22 2022/23 2023/24	£200k £100k £75k £75k
Property investment	SMT	2019/20 2020/21 2021/22 2022/23	£50k £300k £50k £50k

6 Actively pursue alternative service delivery methods and models

Shared services

Whilst there has been encouragement for authorities to provide services jointly on the basis of perceived significant cost savings, this has not always been borne out when detailed option appraisal has been done. However, now Strata Service Solutions Ltd has been formed, this will facilitate the sharing of systems. Individual business cases will be taken forward where the initial high level assessment indicates that they will deliver significant, quantifiable savings in the short, medium and long term.

Delivering services with communities

The role of the organisation may need to adapt in some areas from being a direct provider of services with professional officers providing the solutions to more of an enabler, helping local communities and supporting them to find their own solutions.

It is not intended that there should be a uniform approach for all service areas but instead to allow service areas to consider this if appropriate and move forward at the right pace.

EDDC needs to develop its thinking and debate about the extent to which services could be delivered with, rather than for communities. This is a process which will require recognising and identifying the knowledge, skills and experience which already exist locally and which can be developed and employed to mutual benefit. The impact should be to raise morale, enhance resilience, encourage greater independence and support communities to assume responsibility for local services.

When thinking about how we deliver services there could be greater scope to involve towns and parishes and community led service delivery.

Key actions	Owner	Time-scale	Comments / savings anticipated
Investigation of sharing services	Chief Executive	2019/20	TBC with individual business case
Housing Company	JG	2019/20 2020/21 2021/22	£10k £50k £50k
Investigation of a Trust model for countryside and parks or rebranding countryside team to generate a greater income stream	CP/AH	2020/21	TBC

7 Adopt place based approaches to grow local economies

District councils have a key opportunity to collaborate around functional economic areas and engage robustly with LEPS to ensure that opportunities and benefits accrue to local businesses and communities and to participate fully in the development of local industrial strategies.

We will continue to focus on the delivery of houses and jobs as outlined in our Council Plan priorities.

Key actions	Owner	Time-scale	Comments /anticipated savings
Devon Pilot Scheme for Business rates	SD	2019/20	TBC

