



**DIRECTORATE OF
COMMUNITY &
COMMUNICATIONS
BUSINESS PLAN
(APRIL 2015)**

Statement of Key Priorities & Targets - Directorate of Community & Communications (April 2015)

Introduction

The merger of the former CCDS with Revenues and Benefits brings opportunities to further integrate the council's customer service activity - particularly around revenues.

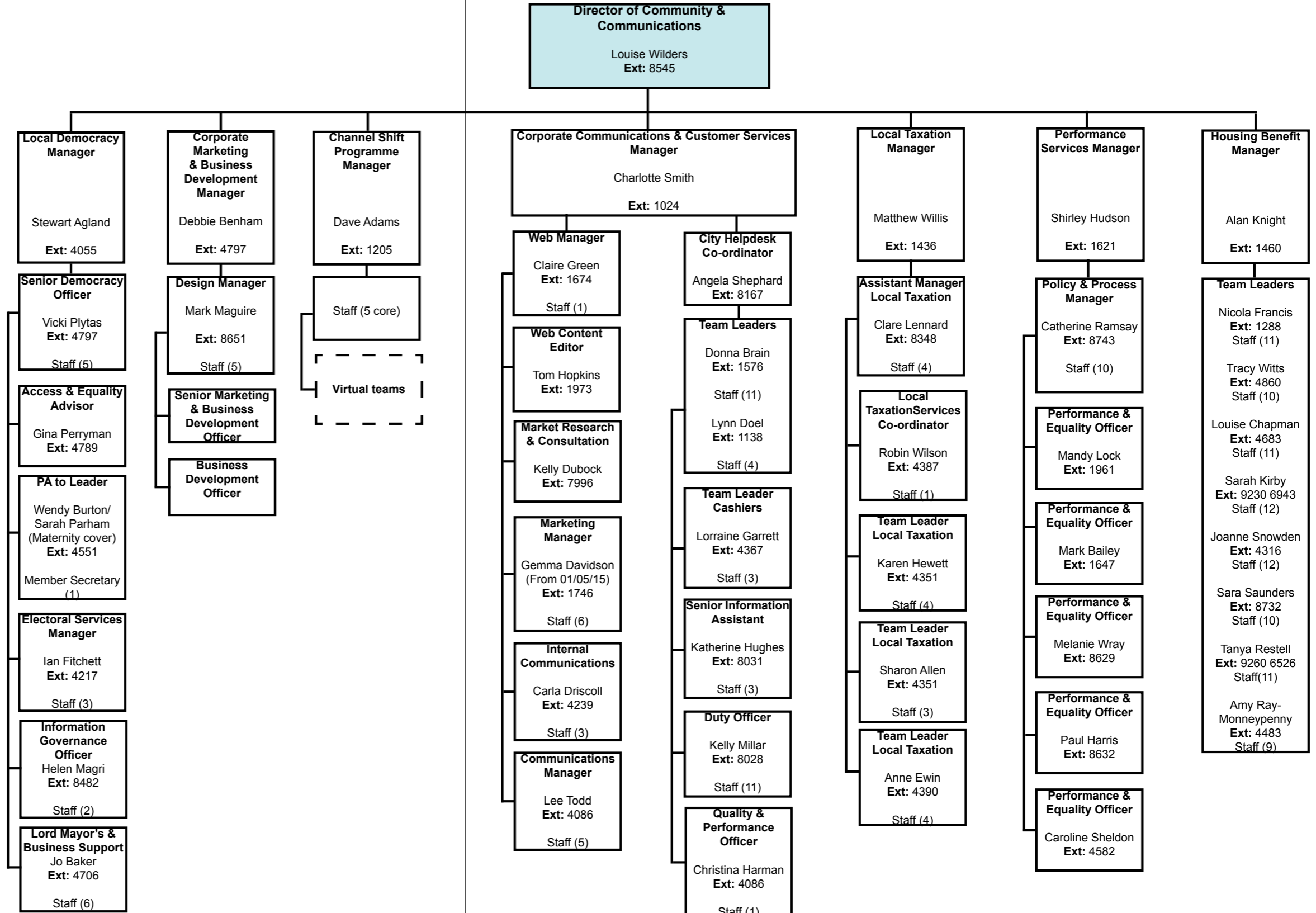
The future role of the local authority remains uncertain and subject to national political dynamics that are, at this stage, impossible to predict with any degree of confidence.

Decisions about the extent to which and the exact timing of when local HB claims will be migrated to Universal Credit remain fluid and there is currently no concrete timescale for this to be achieved. Clearly, the directorate will need to respond flexibly to changing circumstances for this element of our service provision, either in terms of planning for a smooth transfer of functions or (if transition is further delayed or modified) managing and further improving the service over a more protracted period. It is important to note that even when the business is transferred, CTS will still require local management and as of yet there is no real indication of how this work will be funded

The new directorate structure is shown here ►

The core management team of the directorate has considerably reduced in recent years following various corporate and service-level restructures, such that more functions are now combined under fewer managers, with reduced levels of specialism at 3rd tier.

In the pages that follow, I have set out the key plans that I have for the directorate going forward and have articulated how these contribute to the council's wider priorities, how the directorate will contribute to helping the council continue to meet the financial challenges it faces, and what the directorate could look like in the medium-term.



1 - Plans to innovate and transform

All of our projects will fit with the medium-term financial strategy, in terms of reducing the council's dependence on central government grant (and within PCC, the directorate's dependence on the general fund), reducing the need among the population for PCC services and increasing efficiency.

Every element of the directorate will be subject to substantive programmes of change during the plan period, outlined below are the main projects and programmes we will be leading on:

Channel Shift Programme

The channel shift programme will enable PCC to radically modernise its approach to customer service so that over time:

- Most customer enquiries can be completed by the customer online 24/7;
- We have rich intelligence on how our customers contact us and what for; and we use that intelligence to inform service design in the future;
- We will have clear, simple business processes that are easy for customer-facing staff to learn and wherever possible mirror the customer process;
- Staff encourage customers to use self-service technology;
- We need and use fewer line-of-business systems;
- We use postal services only when legally or practically required to do so;
- We will ensure that all residents and businesses can still access PCC services, especially where they cannot do so online themselves

As well as being a corporate programme, aimed at reshaping the council's customer service model, the channel shift programme will also support substantial change within the directorate. The City Helpdesk (and Cashiers) will become smaller in size (but broader in scope), dealing increasingly only with more complex customer enquiries or where the customer is unable to use the web as their communications channel. Communications and web team functions will be focussed on enabling this change and in the latter case the role will shift from developing the council's website to support requirements from services, to a more fluid model of change, ensuring that the council's web presence is fit-for-purpose to handle over 200,000 additional transactions that are currently conducted over the phone or face-to-face.

This programme will also change the way the council runs its decision-making processes internally, as we seek to develop the ModGov tool further and roll-out fully-online report management within the authority.

In addition to the practical elements of the programme in terms of technology and customer service processes, a key aspect of the impact of the work will be on the directorate's and the council's organisational culture. Once fully-implemented, channel shift will fundamentally change the nature of the working day for staff in many roles, both within the directorate and across the authority. However, to ensure that the programme is successful and achieves the level of change we intend, we will build in mechanisms to engage with managers and staff at all levels and secure crucial buy-in.

RBE Transformation Project

In view of the requirement to make significant budget reductions through 2015/16 onwards, it will be essential to consider alternative models of service delivery. It has been agreed that, following approval from the Administration, options around a public/private partnership will be examined to decide if the option is worth pursuing.

The key requirement for the Council is that all work will be badged seamlessly as Portsmouth City Council and that the Council will maintain control over the work in this area. It is highly preferable that there will be no job losses and that jobs stay in Portsmouth, however it is recognised that this could prove difficult given many of the business models in the Government sector.

This feasibility project, commencing in June, will identify service improvements and opportunities as well as ascertaining whether or not the Council should proceed with a public/private partnership. The initial scope is the Revenues & Benefits service, with the option to also consider Central Debt Recovery and City Help Desk & further on potentially other support services.

Single Fraud Investigation Service

The Government's fraud & error strategy includes plans for a single fraud investigation service (SFIS), a new integrated risk and intelligence unit and a new regional mobile task force. This service will investigate welfare fraud across all benefits and Tax Credits administered by DWP, HMRC and Local Authorities. This will include Local Authority Housing Benefit fraud functions. We will facilitate the migration of Local Authority benefit fraud investigations to the Single Fraud Investigation Service by September 2015

Universal Credit [2016 onwards]

Universal Credit is intended to provide a streamlined welfare system which makes the financial advantages of taking work or increasing hours clear to claimants.

This will mean that all claims to income based Jobseekers Allowance, Income Support, income based Employment Support Allowance, Housing Benefit, Working Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit would gradually move to Universal Credit. This proposal is for an integrated working-age credit that will provide a basic allowance.

For Portsmouth, the process of migrating HB work to the DWP is planned to commence sometime between December 2015 and April 2016.

Move of Housing Benefit work to DWP [2016 onwards]

Universal Credit will be managed by the Department for Work and Pensions – as opposed to today's delivery of current benefits & tax credits through the Department for Work and Pensions, HM Revenue & Customs and LAs.

Removing Housing Benefit processing from Local Authorities will:

1. Reduce caseload
2. Remove need to collect rent proof to support new claims or changes in rent.
3. Remove the need to consider impacts Housing Benefit legislation

The uncertainty over the migration timetable coupled with the slow start nationally and extended period for migration means that it has not yet been practical to prepare a plan for this, however, this will be worked on during the Autumn as more information becomes available.

The movement of HB work has not yet started - it is currently planned to start sometime between December 2015 and April 2016, and it is anticipated that it will take many years to complete.

The major concern here is that the DWP will significantly reduce the administration grant whilst the actual remaining work will not reduce significantly in the short term and in any case at full implementation will still be around two thirds of the current workload.

A Council Tax Support claim takes around 10% less processing than a combined, or HB only claim.

Local Support Framework for Universal Credit delivery [2016 onwards]

The DWP in partnership with Local Authorities plans to set up local support frameworks for the delivery of Universal Credit.

Our directorate on behalf of PCC anticipates being part of two local frameworks:

- 1) In the Portsmouth area as a major player in the local framework, along with DWP/Jobcentre Plus & partners in the city, including voluntary & community sector, registered social landlords and private landlords;
- 2) In the Havant Borough Council area as a provider in the local framework where Portsmouth's Housing tenants require support, particularly in relation to their housing needs

The outcomes for the local support framework should be:

- Provide continuity for claimants through transition from current main DWP benefits, Housing Benefit & Tax Credits to Universal Credit;
- Provide support for new Universal Credit claimants;
- Put in place a support structure for on-going Universal Credit claims;
- Maintain support for homeless placed in temporary accommodation - they will migrate to Universal Credit, but still receive Housing Benefit.

Income Generation and Corporate Savings

The directorate has been developing a range of income streams over recent years, largely out of the marketing and communications infrastructure, which have been aimed at either delivering corporate savings by insourcing (eg graphic design), leading major savings programmes on print and advertising frameworks (MAP project) or generating revenue and sponsorship externally (eg publications, advertising, business support, Fol). This has developed as far as it can within the current operating model of the service and we now need to make strategic choices about how the authority approaches this work moving forward. Options include:

- Develop a trading company model as the vehicle for this work
- Keep functions internal and seek to take on business from other LAs in the region
- Transfer some functions internally and rationalise

Democracy

There is considerable scope for further modernisation within the council's democracy functions (elections and democratic services). As noted, during the plan period we will seek to develop use of the ModGov tool to enable fully-electronic report production and management for democratic services. As well as being more efficient for the authority as a whole, this work will change the nature of democratic services as a team, further enhancing support to members and the democratic process and will require cultural change across the organisation in both in terms of Forward Planning and engagement.

In addition we plan to work with Learning and Development and IS to ensure that our elected members are fully supported in being digitally enabled and networked.

Marketing

The directorate's marketing function will be a key enabler of the changes set out above and for other parts of the authority, in terms of:

- corporate narratives - review and develop with focus on (positive) demand reduction (helping people to help themselves, building thriving communities)
- developing a strategic marketing framework into an audience-based hybrid for 2014/15 with a full audience based approach for 2015/16
- prioritisation of marketing campaigns/activity focus on reducing demand (channel shift/avoidable contact), savings and increasing income
- prioritisation of marketing campaigns that drive positive behaviour change around prevention/early intervention
- developing and implementing toolkits/templates/framework to improve efficiency - using audience-based approach and market research

2 - Drivers of cost and demand

These vary across the constituent parts of the directorate, each of which are discussed in more detail below. As a key element of our approach to ensuring resilience, the directorate has developed a significant number of staff with skills transferable across teams, in order to enable the management team to 'flex' resources across functions as the need arises. A timely example of this is the annual election cycle, which is seen and understood by staff to be a whole-directorate responsibility, with staff from all areas expected to pitch

in and members of the management team being taken 'offline' as required.

City Helpdesk, Council Tax and Housing Benefit - At its most basic level, demand for these services is driven by the extent to which the public want to communicate with the council's various customer-facing services. Again, this varies according to function, so, for example the Council Tax annual billing process or regular summons runs will generate a predictable spike in demand. For other service lines, demand can be influenced by external events or conditions eg highways, waste management. In addition to these drivers, there are also processes internal to PCC that generate demand, for example letters and publicity sent to the public sometimes un-necessary, often confusing.

Clearly though, demand in the context of customer service does not automatically drive cost and in recent years costs have been significantly reduced (by staffing cuts) in some cases faster than efficiency gains and process improvements can make good the deficit. To some extent, therefore, a key driver of cost in customer facing areas such as CHD, as opposed to demand, is the level of customer service that the council chooses to offer, compared to its various other priorities. In other areas, unless efficiency gains mirror the reduction in budgets, further cost can be driven into the service through error rate and reductions in subsidy.

Both the Channel Shift Programme and RBE Transformation Project will result in change across the directorate in terms of size, scope and operating model.

Communications

For communications, the key drivers of cost and demand are to some extent dictated by dynamics elsewhere in the council:

- reductions in resources elsewhere lead to increased demand for support where services would previously have delivered work themselves
- reductions in services result in increased chance of media/reputational issues that require communications support
- statutory requirement for the council to warn and inform in an emergency context
- new requirements under Care Act to provide universal information and advice
- Increasing requirement for internal communications due to scale and pace of council-wide changes that affect staff.

Over time, the service has vastly reduced the amount of funding required centrally for core corporate

communications and marketing services and the majority of resource available is now funded by services in support of specific projects.

Web team

For the web team, the key drivers of demand are:

- the extent of the councils requirements to deliver a responsive, customer-focussed website;
- the expectations of council services about their own offer within the corporate site;
- strategic choices the council makes with regard to sourcing development in-house or by procurement;
- the need to act as a key catalyst for channel shift

Democratic Services

The demand and costs of democratic services are in part driven by political choices made about the shape, size and requirements of the political management structure. At a very fundamental level, the more meetings that are held both within that structure, formal and informal, and in some cases outside the formal structure eg cross authority meetings, the more support required. The volume of work emanating from such meetings is also a factor. Beyond this, team capacity is in part shaped by

(a) where the split in responsibilities lies for report preparation between Democratic Services and report authors/directors. Full implementation of ModGov will give the council the opportunity to have a more streamlined report preparation process, but will require report authors and contributors to take greater responsibility for their work, in terms of timeliness, format, correct drafting of recommendations, undertaking the requisite consultations and accuracy.

(b) the extent that the role scrutiny plays within the Council's decision making process. The Administration has made clear its intentions to enhance and develop the role and involvement of scrutiny in the pre decision process in support of the Cabinet.

Statutory/Policy Issues

The service is responsible for a number of relatively small-scale parts of the authority that have deep statutory requirements and broad scope, for example:

- Freedom of information;
- Equalities & Diversity
- Data Protection
- Corporate Complaints

Demand in these areas in terms of raw volume of enquiries is largely driven by random extraneous events or changes in government policy, but in all cases we have seen significant increases in demand over the past 5 years. Costs in these areas have been reduced over time by adopting minimum staffing levels and cross-skilling some staff to provide a degree of resilience. There is more work to be done in complaints and FoI to enable customers to self-serve in future and this can be achieved through the channel shift programme.

Revenues & Benefits

Demand in both of these elements of the directorate is driven by:

- Legislative decisions taken by central government (eg Universal Credit)
- Policy decisions taken locally (eg CTS)
- Wider economic changes (eg Revenues, all benefits)

The former Head of Revenues and Benefits has presided over a productivity gain of 50% over six years (measures in terms of staffing v output) and this robust approach to driving out efficiencies will continue.

3 - Key Directorate risks

Budget reductions

Since the 2010/11 financial year, budget reductions have arguably graduated to a level above 'risk' and are now the central overriding reality of our operating environment. Specifically, the requirement to continue to deliver substantially the same portfolio of services while reducing the cost by in excess of 10% every year is such a dominant issue that it now defines most of the council and the directorates strategic objectives.

The plans set out in section 1 above around channel shift, PPP, income generation, etc, are the only viable mitigations that the directorate has to this risk, as well as being our core strategic aims.

Political instability (locally and nationally)

Because of the statutory footing of much of the directorate, its functions are particularly exposed to changes in the political dynamic at a national level. In elections and revenues & benefits, the range of potential changes being debated nationally could result in the need for acceleration or abandonment of existing plans, changes in scope and responsibility, or new initiatives requiring scarce change management resources. Potential changes/challenges include:

- Voting at 16/17
- Boundary reviews
- Abolition or retention of PCCs
- Referenda
- Revaluation of business properties
- Delay/review of Universal Credit
- Extension of localisation and elected mayors
- Introduction/piloting of online voting, votes at weekends, and on-the-day registration

Staffing resources

The structure of the directorate has evolved into its current form over time and in general has resulted in the range of functions under the management team becoming broader in scope and more fragmented. Wherever possible, in response to each restructure we have leveraged any synergies available between combined teams and now have reached the position where there are many staff within the directorate with experience and skills that can be applied in multiple areas. This provides a degree of flexibility and resilience to the team, but creates a longer term problem in terms of workforce planning, as we are reliant on more and more staff that in practical terms perform a range of functions outside of their core job role.

Corporate Buy-in

Our plans for channel shift (and to a lesser extent RBE Transformation) will require a broad and substantial change in organisational culture to be fully-successful. Implementing change of this scale and breadth will require buy-in from politicians, management, and staff across the organisation. If this is not forthcoming, whilst we will be able to implement the technological and process changes required, they will fail to have the desired impact in terms of changing the behaviours of customers and staff, and as a result the council will not make the level of financial savings that it potentially could.

We have sought to mitigate this risk by establishing a Channel Shift Programme Board including key council decision-makers, as well as engaging key stakeholders in discussions about our plans since early-2014. Due to the pace of change at the council, this will be a constant process throughout the life of the programme and we have established a specific workstream to address the cultural aspects of the change with staff and managers.

Universal Credit

There is considerable uncertainty over Universal Credit, with no clear plan from the DWP for migration. Assuming that UC does go ahead, the process of transition itself represents a risk to the authority in terms of retaining sufficient skilled staff to manage the remaining caseload during the migration period. In addition there is a justified concern that the DWP will significantly reduce the administration grant whilst the actual remaining work will not reduce significantly in the short term and in any case at full implementation will still be around two thirds of the current workload.

Once all HB processing is removed the workload reduction is estimated at 33% and the caseload reduction is estimated at 27%.

4 - Service Resilience

The plans for modernisation and change set out on the preceding pages will be key to ensuring the resilience of the CCS directorate in the coming years.

First and foremost, we are exploring all plausible opportunities to provide functions in partnership with other organisations, or to reduce our own overheads by providing services on behalf of other public bodies.

As noted, we have plans in place across all areas of the directorate to reduce costs or increase income in future years and we have an existing and well-developed culture within many parts of the directorate of flexible and multi-skilled staffing, enabling the team to shift resources readily between different areas of need, this will be rolled out to all parts of the directorate.

Lower impact services have already been reduced to levels that are either the minimum required to meet the authority's legal duties (eg Fol, equalities), or the minimum level of political acceptability (eg Members' services, Lord Mayor's Office). Further reductions in the most recent budget round have focussed on Community Engagement and Equalities.

For both Revenues and The City Helpdesk, we are clear that the channel shift and RBE transformation programmes will represent a fundamental reshaping of the council's corporate approach to customer services and as such the size, structure, and cost of the teams will change significantly over the plan period.

5 - Directorate KPIs

The KPIs below will be used throughout the plan period to support achievement of services objectives. Although most parts of the service have a range of operational and/or statutory KPIs, the list below focusses on those that will be most important strategically or have a financial impact on the authority.

Budget

- Monthly outturn forecast (service-wide)
- Monthly outturn forecast (team-specific)
- Income generation targets
- Achievement of corporate annual savings target

Channel Shift (includes web and CHD)

- Reduction in call volumes to city helpdesk
- Reduction in call volumes to other in-scope services
- Reduction in face-to-face customer enquiries at civic offices
- Reduction in payments to cashiers at civic offices
- Reduction in PCC Spending on post/carriage and print
- Customer satisfaction
- Increase in online payments, direct debits, or other automated channels
- Increase in web enquiries submitted via online forms

Local Taxation

- CT collection rate
- NDR collection rate
- Debt recovery

Benefits

- Cycle time for new claims
- Cycle time for CoC
- Processing accuracy
- Overpayments
- Level of outstanding benefit debt

With responsibility for internal communications, the directorate will also monitor and manage a number of KPIs that reflect the impact of change over time on PCC corporately:

- reputation (proud to work for the council and well-informed) via staff survey
- commitment to objectives - via staff survey
- employee engagement - measures to be developed
- internal behaviour change - measures to be developed

6 - Future Directorate Model (3-5 years)

While clearly the next few years represent a period of considerable uncertainty for the authority, there are core functions of the directorate that will endure regardless of changes in budget, structure and policy.

- The directorate will remain an effective and respected custodian of the city's democratic infrastructure.
- The directorate will continue to support our most vulnerable customers in ensuring appropriate advice, guidance and payment of relevant benefits
- The directorate will continue to maintain and diversify the council's range of communication channels with the public;
- The directorate will take corporate responsibility for the council's approach to customer service and provide first level customer contact where required for other council departments;
- The directorate will lead the transformation of the council to a 'digital first' organisation.

Outside of these core objectives, in structural terms the shape and size of the directorate will, out of necessity, be the consequence of the range of uncertainties set out in the pages above. It is possible, however, to provide some clarity over our planned direction of travel:

Corporate communications will have further developed into an agency model, with a small corporate core and a series of account managers responsible for key campaigns, either within the council or on behalf of other organisations.

The directorate will be working in partnership across many areas (revenues, print etc) and will be delivering services, (thus generating income) for others.

Universal Credit roll-out will have been completed.

City Helpdesk will be numerically smaller and dealing with a different mix of customer enquiries and will be more closely integrated with the web contact.

Democratic Services will be modernised, concentrating its resources on the efficient and effective administration of the authority's constitutional requirements.

Above all, the directorate will remain, a positive, innovative force for improvement within the council, supporting all parts of the authority through transformation, budget reductions, and legislative change.

Directorate of Community and Communications

Civic Offices
Guildhall Square
Portsmouth
PO1 2BQ

Telephone: 023 9268 8545

Email: Louise.Wilders@portsmouthcc.gov.uk