

Resources and Fire & Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee

17 March 2016

WCC Project and Programme Management Update

Recommendation

That the Resources and Fire and Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee review this report which provides an update on the project and programme management processes used at WCC and consider areas for further scrutiny as appropriate.

1. Background

- 1.1 In 2011, Cabinet recommended implementation of a consistent Warwickshire County Council approach to managing all significant projects. Detailed proposals were agreed and rolled out across the Council around a number of key themes including:
 - Contract Standing Orders;
 - Procurement Code of Practice;
 - Corporate Risk Management Strategy;
 - Corporate Project Management Approach; and
 - Corporate Performance Management.
- 1.2 A number of corporate frameworks around these themes were developed to support delivery of significant projects and a further update on progress was presented to Communities Overview & Scrutiny Committee in March 2013.
- 1.3 As part of this work a corporate Project and Programme Management Framework was developed and launched in 2013. The framework included guidance on project management processes, roles and responsibilities (based on the PRINCE2 approach), a risk register template and a checklist to enable 'significant' projects to be identified.
- 1.4 Projects were identified as significant if they had very high risks associated with them; had organisation-wide benefits; could lead to sustained negative reputational impact; had a cost over £5million or were identified by Strategic Directors as significant. Significant projects were recorded in a dedicated 'significant' projects register, and Corporate Board took the lead on regularly monitoring delivery of these projects.
- 1.5 The framework was supported by a programme of learning and development, to ensure that project and programme managers had the skills and knowledge

to perform effectively, and a successful project manager's conference was held to encourage and enable knowledge and skills sharing.

1.6 In 2014, an initial review of project and programme governance identified that across the Council a number of measures had been taken to ensure that appropriate governance systems were in place for projects, including widespread adoption of Terms of Reference for project and programme boards and development of governance structures to support, monitor and where necessary challenge project delivery.

1.7 Activity around project and programme management has continued to evolve to reflect the Council's focus on transformational change, and to support delivery of Council-wide outcomes including the One Organisational Plan. In times of austerity, it is particularly important that resources are used effectively and that robust processes are in place to ensure delivery of increasingly complex projects and, to gain customer insight. In 2015, a high level review of internal project and programme governance arrangements across the Council was undertaken to:

- better understand current practices and good practice;
- streamline governance structures to enable better decision-making and reporting and to avoid duplication;
- ensure that projects and programmes are delivering a clear contribution towards corporate outcomes;
- enable more effective coordination between projects and programmes; and
- ensure greater transparency and visibility of projects across the Council.

1.8 The review was used to identify what the Council wanted to achieve in terms of internal project and programme governance, and a number of key principles were developed to challenge and refine existing structures, boards and bodies. The review was endorsed by Corporate Board and GLTs were delegated to take forward the recommendations within their Groups.

2. Update on Project and Programme Arrangements

2.1 Current practices

2.1.1 The 2015 review identified a number of additional project registers, at Group and Business Unit level that were being used to complement the significant projects register, and to ensure that project delivery was effectively monitored. A number of good practices were also identified around project reporting and escalation and these were shared.

2.1.2 In Business Units that deliver projects with high capital costs e.g. Transport & Highways, Physical Assets and Information Assets, business-specific project management systems have also been developed to ensure effective management and monitoring of budgets, time and delivery, often involving

internal and external clients and contractors. For example, Physical Assets is currently rolling out its Atlasweb system which has the capability to track work undertaken by third parties, and Information Assets uses its 'Work Take On' system to assign resource and track delivery of projects for internal clients.

2.2 Appropriate governance structures

2.2.1 As part of the review, project and programme boards in place across the Council were mapped. The mapping helped to identify areas where there was potential duplication of reporting, to identify opportunities for streamlining governance, and for adding additional governance at appropriate points.

2.2.2 The key principles which were identified are summarised as follows:

- i. Scope and purpose needs to be defined and clearly aligned with OOP outcomes and/or key significant/ statutory drivers;
- ii. Clear strategic and business level priorities are required at WCC level to enable systematic prioritisation of resources;
- iii. A clear consistent governance structure should inform a 'common language' to ensure transparency and visibility;
- iv. Interdependencies and linkages should be considered and reflected in structures and body membership;
- v. Delegation of authority, escalation criteria and decision points should be clearly defined and consistently applied, with project and programme boards empowered to fulfil their roles.
- vi. Reporting lines should reflect the governance structure and should be explicitly set out and applied. Reporting to other bodies 'for information' should be limited.
- vii. Project registers should be maintained to ensure that transparent and timely information is available to those that deliver activity and are responsible and accountable for it.
- viii. Internal, and where appropriate, external, peer challenge of boards and bodies should be encouraged at all levels and systems put in place to support this.

2.2.3 At officer level the Customer and Transformation Board (CTB), chaired by the Strategic Director for Resources and including the other two Strategic Directors and the Chief Fire Officer, holds overall responsibility for project and programme governance; ensuring that Group level project arrangements are robust and, where necessary, acting as the escalation authority for project and programme decisions. The C&TB has oversight of all customer-focused and transformational activity, with a particular focus on projects that are delivering outcomes and savings identified in the One Organisational Plan. It receives regular highlight reports on key projects in this area, and has the ability to challenge and support delivery as required.

2.2.4 The C&TB is also championing the use of project management tools designed to ensure that projects are properly scoped, consulted on, managed and delivered, and that there is focus on quality and outcomes, not just delivery to time and budget.

2.3 Contribution to corporate outcomes

2.3.1 During the past 12 months there has been significant activity across the Council to improve corporate performance reporting, through the Management Information Dashboard, with a focus on tracking delivery of OOP outcomes. Work is now underway to look at how project performance can be aligned with the outcomes framework, and options are being considered for an 'outcome mapping' exercise for projects later in the year.

2.3.2 In addition, project prioritisation criteria are being used to identify key projects making a significant contribution to OOP outcomes and savings, as well as identifying those that are important in terms of statutory duty, potential reputational risk and financial value.

2.4 Coordination, transparency and visibility

2.4.1 Significant work is in progress across the Council to ensure projects and programmes are better co-ordinated and that interdependencies are recognised and that governance structures recognise this.

2.4.2 At a corporate level, CorProject, a cross Council project register is being developed. The register will bring together key project information from across the Council into a central register. This register will deliver a number of key benefits:

- Transparent, joined-up, real-time project information will inform decision-making, including deployment of resources;
- Project information will be provided in a clear, simple, consistent format
- Dependencies can be clearly identified;
- Monitoring of delivery will be consistent, and there will be the opportunity to focus on contribution to outcomes and benefits realisation
- Project and programme staff will be able to spend less time on administration and reporting and more time on delivery and added-value activities;
- Integration of a number of reporting systems will give added insight around delivery;
- Project and programme managers, project boards and management will be empowered through access to knowledge.

2.4.3 The register is being developed using the same software package as the Management Information Dashboard (to allow integration of performance and project management information), and will enable officers to get up-to-date information on projects, programmes and their status in a simple, consistent and easy to interpret format. Initially the system will be used to collate

information on 'core' project data collected in existing project registers – this includes:

- key project information;
- project status with regards time, resource and budget;
- project benefits including how a project contributes to OOP savings and outcomes.

2.4.4 As CorProject develops and is rolled out, it is anticipated that the system could be used to report wider project information including project risks, performance indicators and project costs, and it will import and export data from other systems to avoid duplication of effort, and to ensure for monitoring purposes, that there is 'one version of the truth' .

3. Next Steps

3.1 Once the CorProject register is rolled out, a Member Projects Dashboard will be developed and added to the current suite of information available through the Management Information Dashboard.

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Local Member(s): None

Other members: Councillor Peter Fowler, Councillor Kam Kaur, Councillor Matt Western, Councillor Neil Dirveiks, Councillor Nicola Davies