

# Business improvement strategy

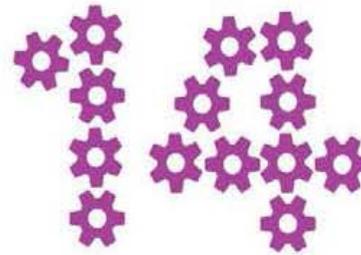
Delivering support to services across the organisation including performance management, benchmarking, peer reviews as well as embedding a LEAN approach and corporate insight gained from lessons learnt.

## What is it?

Improving the effectiveness and efficiency of Council services.



## Context



We are developing a **programme of improvement** to ensure the Council is fit for the future

## We face challenges...



## What are the priorities?

Running a programme of organisational development activities to find solutions to common issues facing service delivery staff

Learning best practice from other organisations and listening to customer feedback

Supporting services to undertake reviews in order to identify efficiencies and improvements



# Corporate Improvement Strategy 2016

Reducing bureaucracy, simplifying  
corporate processes and improving  
organisational effectiveness

Part of Cornwall Council's Organisational Development  
Framework

**Approved by Full Council  
– 16 February 2016**

## **Foreword – Cath Robinson, Interim Director of Communities and Organisational Development**

I am pleased to introduce our Corporate Improvement Strategy, which sets out the Council's ambitions for organisational change, including how we plan to reduce bureaucracy and simplify corporate processes.

The Corporate Improvement Strategy also aims to increase the capacity of the organisation to respond to specific service delivery challenges and to lay the foundations for improvement projects throughout the Council.

Continuous improvement of the organisation is critical to the Council's efficiency and effectiveness. We will address our organisational strengths and weaknesses through a coordinated programme of improvement and organisational development activities.

Whilst we need robust corporate processes to help us deal with major challenges, such as cuts to our government grant, and major opportunities, like the Deal for Cornwall and maximising the benefits of European funding, we need corporate processes which are simple, fully understood and well supported.

To manage these challenges and opportunities we must have a clear understanding of our organisation, people, systems, processes, strategies, resources, strengths and weaknesses. We must also support the organisation to plan, deliver, listen and learn from the insights we gather through the course of our work.

By engaging with staff, members, residents and other interested parties, we will drive forward this strategy together.

### **Links with other strategies and initiatives**

In addition to supporting the delivery of the Council's Strategy and Corporate Business Plan, the Corporate Improvement Strategy lays the foundations for the Council's overarching Organisational Development (OD) Framework and therefore links closely with all of the component strategies of the OD framework.

The Corporate Improvement Strategy will also help to ensure that Cornwall Council is in good shape as we enter into new partnerships and integrate our delivery with others delivering public services in Cornwall.

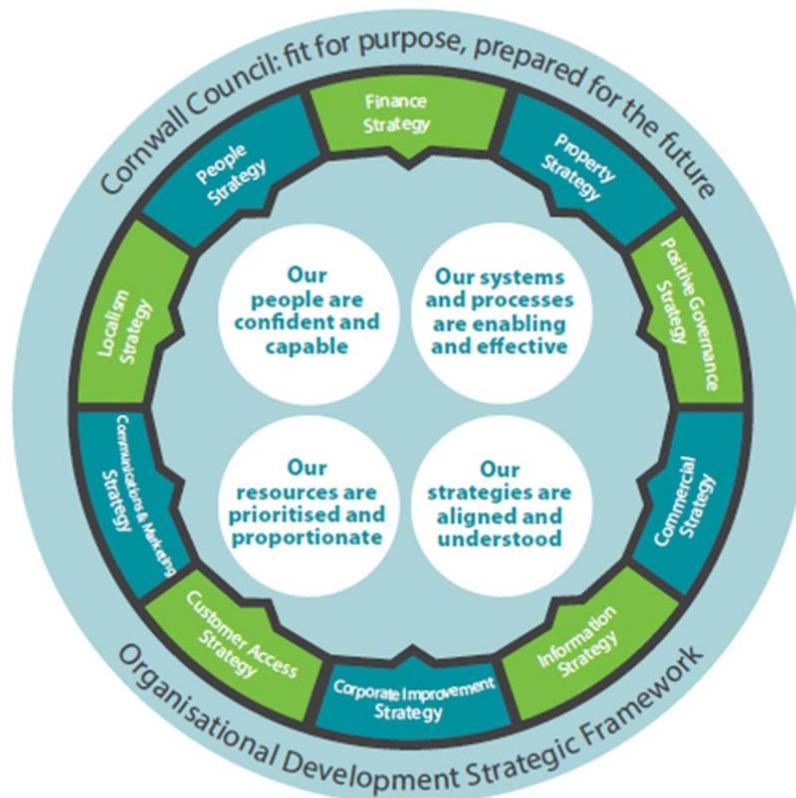
## Cornwall Council's Organisational Development Framework

The Corporate Improvement Strategy is one of ten strategies which sit beneath Cornwall Council's Organisational Development (OD) Strategic Framework.

Each strategy focusses on a different aspect of the organisation and will contribute to the overall ambition of the OD Strategic Framework:

### ***Cornwall Council; fit for purpose and prepared for the future***

The Corporate Improvement Strategy will also contribute to the achievement of the four strategic aims of the OD framework:



The actions identified in the ten strategies will be incorporated into the Council's annual business and service plans for delivery. These are subject to the Council's standard performance and risk management processes.

The Organisational Development Steering Group will monitor delivery of the overall framework and progress towards the four strategic aims.

## Context

Supporting Cornwall Council's services to deliver effectively is a complex task.

The Council is one of the largest unitary authorities with around 5,500 staff employed directly. It is divided into three directorates, covering 13 services, and we have in the order of 250 statutory duties that we are required by law to undertake. We also own a group of companies, employing over 2,500 staff who deliver a range of services in Cornwall.

We deliver services over the biggest geographical area of any unitary council in England from 220 network connected sites using 1,300 business software applications.

At the same time, we face significant challenges:

- Rising costs and demand for Council services
- Changing legislation
- Changing demographics
- Increasing customer expectation
- Reducing budget
- Fewer employees, leading to new ways of working and cultural change

While we have already made savings of £170m over the past four years, mainly through efficiencies, we need to make further significant savings from April 2016.

Our Corporate Improvement strategy is made up of three strategic aims:



Over the next few pages, each of these will be presented as follows:

- The **strategic aim** describes what we are going to do to support the overall Council Strategy.
- The **rationale** explains why this is important and describes the current context.
- The activities explain **what we will need to do** or put in place to achieve our strategic aims.
- The measures describe **how we will evaluate our success**.

## How will we deliver the Corporate Improvement Strategy?

The Advisory and Business Development team of the Business Planning and Development Service will work with colleagues across the organisation to:

- understand organisational strengths and weaknesses
- identify issues by engaging and listening
- co-design solutions and improvements
- simplifying processes and reducing bureaucracy
- drive the delivery of change and the overall programme of corporate improvement and organisational development activity.

## How will we measure our success?

We will measure the success of this strategy in five areas. The strategy will help:

- **Strengthen employee engagement across all services** - measured via the employee survey and other engagement indicators.
- **Ensure the Council's business plans are informed by evidence, what Cornwall needs, and that services delivered are effective and value for money** – informed by the residents' survey, benchmarking, case studies of best practice and end of year reports, and assessments of our services and plans.
- **Increase the involvement of customers in shaping the services they receive** – measured by co-production of plans, activities and projects.
- **Encourage clear, honest and open leadership from the top down** – measured through the staff survey and staff engagement forums.
- **Strengthen internal and external relationships to support new partnership models and ways of working** – measured by progress on the integration agenda and development of new delivery models such as the Cornwall Deal.

## **Strategic Aim**

### **Improving organisational effectiveness**

#### **The rationale...**

To ensure the Council is fit for purpose now and prepared for the future, we need to understand our strengths and weaknesses as an organisation and deal with them in a coordinated way.

This means engaging with frontline service delivery teams, members, residents and our partners to identify issues and co-design solutions that will drive corporate and service specific organisational development and improvement activities.

#### **We will achieve our aim by...**

- Creating a single system – an Organisational Development Framework - for identifying, monitoring and prioritising the Council's organisational development and corporate improvement needs.
- Identifying and improving issues which impact significantly on our effectiveness.
- Collecting evidence of service improvements to show what's working and where more needs to be done.
- Establishing work programmes to deliver and review progress of agreed improvement work.
- Engaging with our people, customers and partners to understand their views to inform and prioritise improvement.

#### **How will we know we've been successful...**

- Awareness and commitment across the organisation of corporate improvement work.
- We will publish examples of service improvements.
- Employee engagement scores will improve.

## **Strategic Aim**

### **Improving corporate processes and support services**

#### **The rationale...**

Our aim is for our corporate processes and support service functions to be transparent, with minimal bureaucracy, and to be fully understood and supported.

Maintaining quality support services and continuously improving our corporate processes is critical to the ongoing efficiency and effectiveness of the whole Council.

#### **We will achieve our aim by...**

- Identifying and improving corporate processes which are not enabling, not transparent, and which are too bureaucratic.
- Providing programme and project management support for the Council and partners on major initiatives.
- Undertaking a fundamental review of support services to ensure they are enabling and fit for purpose.
- Encouraging joined-up working across services to deliver shared outcomes.
- Aligning and integrating business and service planning development in order to focus on the delivery of the Council Strategy.
- Ensuring the Council Strategy connects clearly with our corporate business and service plans, and our team plans.
- Encouraging a culture of performance management supported by evidence based performance information.
- Improve and simplify our corporate performance processes so that performance, financial, project and risk management information is fully integrated.

#### **How will we know we've been successful...**

- We will publish robust and resourced business and service delivery plans.
- We will routinely publish information about our performance on our website.
- Residents, Members and staff will be able to understand the Council's performance information.
- Our performance information will be transparent, accountable and in line with government and public expectations.

## Strategic Aim

### Listening, learning and improving

#### The rationale...

We need to make our listening arrangements more effective and ensure that we engage effectively and use feedback from our people, our residents and our partners to shape our priorities and to deliver improvements to public service delivery in Cornwall.

Other organisations across the public sector in Cornwall and into England are facing similar challenges and we can learn from their experiences, taking the best practice and learning from their mistakes in our improvement activity.

#### We will achieve our aim by...

- Developing a structured approach to learning from others (for example utilising networks, sector-led reviews, peer reviews and inspection) to support improvement activity.
- Building capacity of the organisation to undertake future improvement activity by developing tools, guidance and networks.
- Promoting a culture of continuous improvement through learning from service performance and improvement activity.
- Working with other local authorities and the Local Government Association to understand Cornwall's relative strengths and areas for improvement.
- Gathering and sharing information on public service trends and developments that could impact on current policy and practice.
- Supporting the development of new partnership delivery models for example those arising from the Cornwall Deal.
- Undertaking reviews, using LEAN and AGILE approaches, of key delivery and support functions to reduce bureaucracy and drive improvement.

#### How will we know we've been successful...

- The Council's performance relative to other local authorities will improve.
- There will be more examples of continuous improvement activity at service and organisational level.
- Staff survey results about effective change management will improve.

## Summary...

- To ensure the Council is fit for purpose in the future, we need to understand our strengths and weaknesses as an organisation and deal with them in a coordinated way. This means engaging with frontline service delivery teams, Members and others to identify issues and co-design solutions.
- We also need to increase the capacity of frontline service teams to tackle service specific issues and continuously improve service delivery. To do this, we must prioritise support for service delivery teams to plan, deliver, listen and learn.
- We will address our organisational strengths and weaknesses with a coordinated programme of improvement and development activities.

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