Business Support and Digital

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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Medway 2.0 Roadmap

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Summary

This paper provides an update to the Committee on the Medway 2.0 transformation programme roadmap and invites the Committee to forward its comments to Cabinet.

1   Recommendations

1.1   The Committee is asked to note the rationale, the approach, timeline, and the resource needed to undertake the work outlined in the roadmap including the formation of a cross-party "Member User Testing Group" to allow Councillors to experience and beta-test new services that have been developed.

1.2   The Committee is asked to submit comments to Cabinet on the external and internal services and processes prioritised for discovery at Appendix 1.

2   Budget and policy framework

2.1   Full Council is responsible for agreeing a balanced budget in advance of each financial year. Cabinet is responsible for ensuring that income and expenditure remains within the approved budget. Corporate Management Team is responsible for supporting the Cabinet to achieve this objective through delivery of the One Medway Financial Improvement and Transformation Plan.

2.2   The One Medway Financial Improvement and Transformation (FIT) Plan was agreed by Cabinet on 30 April 2024. The Medway 2.0 Roadmap directly supports the delivery of the plan's targets by providing dedicated service design and improvement capability, which will enable services to streamline and improve their operations, in particular customer-facing activity. It is anticipated that the delivery of savings will be achieved over the four-year duration of the FIT Plan; the roadmap therefore looks beyond the current financial year (2024-2025).

3   Background

3.1   **The "Medway 2.0" concept**
It is important to note that "Medway 2.0" is not a new computer system or magic bullet to quickly transform the Council. It is about reimagining what Medway Council does, and how it does it.

3.2   If we took a blank sheet of paper with the word "resident" in the middle and designed a brand-new Medway Council, based on the latest and greatest technology innovations, would it look the same as it does now? The answer to this question is likely to be "no" because we currently have many core, service-specific, systems that don't all talk to each other, so it is very difficult to create a "single view of the resident" or for the resident to form a "single view of the Council".

3.3   Establishing a "single view of the resident" is vital to enable the Council to wrap services around residents. Our residents and business in Medway all interact with different Council services. If we could join up services in a "resident-centric" way, rather than traditional silos, we would be able to serve our customer more efficiently and effectively. If, for example, a resident applies for disability benefits, we could automatically trigger applications for a blue badge, disabled bus pass, and other relevant benefits. These are all currently separate processes, within separate Council services, and residents are often asked to provide the same evidence multiple times. Establishing a "single view of the resident" would allow services to be joined up from the resident's point of view.

3.4   The resident view of the Council, understandably, is that we are all 'the Council', regardless of which service we work in. Establishing a "single view of the Council" for residents will make the Council much easier to deal with, whether that is to report an issue or check a Council tax balance.

3.5   The Medway 2.0 roadmap has been developed to implement, and iterate, the above key themes.

3.6   **How can services be better, but also more efficient?**
        Medway Council's processes can be broadly broken down into:

3.6.1   **Service Request**
        This is the initial contact from the resident for Medway to perform a service or function. In most cases the initial contact from residents is made by telephone to the Customer and Business Support (CABS) service. CABS are empowered to deal with many "one and done requests"; such as providing information, guidance, and signposting, as well as electronically submitting actual service requests to "back office" teams working in services. In such cases, the customer has chosen to phone, rather than use our e-forms. However, this interaction often leads to another "initial contact" with the service itself, or indeed with CABS when requesting a status update on a request.

3.6.2   **Service Back Office Functions**
        When CABS hand off to a service area, it is often to back-office staff that handle the request prior to passing it on to the frontline staff to perform the actual delivery of the requested process. This activity includes triaging requests, completing various forms, carrying out eligibility checks, scheduling staff, and producing performance data and reports. Some of this work is specific to the service area, but much of it is common to many different Council services, such as checking identity and collecting money. Some of it (triaging) may be duplicating work already carried out by CABS staff.

3.6.3   **Service Delivery**
        This is the frontline function of delivering the service request, such as physically removing the graffiti, fixing a pothole, removing an abandoned vehicle, or setting up a badminton court for a sports centre booking.

3.7   **Untangling and Combining Processes**
        Designing a process, or whole service, around the resident with a new system and fresh approach will ensure that we consistently capture the information we need from customers

in a structured way, which would feed into a central system, allowing us to have end-to-end visibility of all of a customer's interactions with the Council.

3.8   There are currently a few very large suppliers that councils use for their core systems. This had led to services designing processes to fit the software system, rather than supporting resident or user needs, which has resulted in "the tail wagging the dog".

3.9   We can now use new technologies to untangle the various service tasks, allowing us to change and improve them without affecting the other elements as we break away from these single, large, expensive applications and design services to fit resident and then ensuring our systems support our processes.

3.10   The common elements (service patterns) across services can then be identified and combined to make processes better, cheaper, and faster.

3.11   This untangling of services will allow us to focus on developing a consistent "front end" and sharpen the resident contact channels to ensure that structured data is collected and ingested into the Council's central system from any source, such as online forms, telephony, face-to-face, FixMyStreet.com, and social media channels. This alone would provide a much-improved, simple, service to residents.

3.12   We can then reduce the service back-office functions by combining common "service patterns", simplifying processes, and utilising technologies such as automation and artificial intelligence.

3.13   Although the Council delivers a multitude of discrete services, most processes can be distilled down to 10 common functions:

- View it – (website / case management)
- Report it and Sort it,
- Apply for it,
- Book it,
- Pay for it,
- Receive it,
- Check it,
- Appeal it,
- Change/Amend it,
- Tell us about it (compliments and complaints).

3.14   By adopting a corporate platform these common building blocks can be reused across a range of services in a modular way.

3.15   This will:

- Create consistency across different Council services,
- Ensure all forms have the same functionality,
- Allow forms to be "joined up" – e.g. if applying for disability benefits, a blue badge can be provided without customers having to complete another form,
- Rationalise the number of e-forms packages,
- Provide an end-to-end, simplified, and digitalised process design,
- Keep Council staff and customers updated on progress at each stage of the process.

3.16   Technology is clearly a key enabler for the Medway 2.0 concept, but the real benefits, and potential revenue budget savings, come from the re-design of services following the untangling of systems and processes, and a Council-wide recognition that the current

assignment of tasks may not be the most efficient – more cross-cutting team operations might offer better outcomes for our residents.

3.17 We therefore do not underestimate the cultural change required to achieve the Medway 2.0 vision, underpinned by robust governance, regular communication, and strong engagement with stakeholders. Visible CMT and Member sponsorship will also help make the programme a success.

3.18 **Delivering the Medway 2.0 Concept**
A Medway 2.0 transformation roadmap has been developed in consultation with services to understand the current customer journey (the 'as-is' process) so that we can identify pain points, bottlenecks and duplication. Using the as-is flows as a baseline, we will then re-design the service to improve the customer journey and reduce waste.

3.19 We define waste as any part of a process that does not offer value to either the resident or the service: it includes duplication of tasks, double keying of data, handoffs between services, or revisiting a case due to it not being done 'right first time'. In addition to the costs of this failure demand, there is a supplementary cost of the consequences, in terms of increased complaints, the resources required to resolve them, and so on.

3.20 In Appendix 1, we have identified a range of candidate business processes which we believe merit investigation for redesign. These processes have been identified based on criteria, such as:

- High demand (especially in telephony),
- High volume of duplication,
- Extensive reach (relating to impact on large numbers of residents),
- High volume of rework/rejections (revisiting the case),
- Covers a range of service patterns (report it, apply for it etc.),
- Identified as a priority for and by services,
- Potential for significant savings.

3.21 These process flows will be mapped, documented, and analysed in the coming months to show the customer journey from start to finish (i.e. from the initial request via telephony or online forms, via CABS, through to the responsible service and potentially third-party partners/contractors). Until now, most teams have only had sight of their part of the process, making it difficult to identify potential waste in the "end-to-end" flow. This process mapping will highlight process steps that add (or do not add) value.

3.22 Based on this preliminary discovery exercise, which is already underway, a set of threshold criteria will be applied to the mapped process flows in order to prioritise those that will deliver the greatest benefits in terms of customer journey, service efficiencies, and cost savings.

3.23 This exercise needs to be carried out at pace. CMT has therefore agreed to release funding (see 9.3 below) to allow for recruitment of additional specialists, working in partnership with services/subject matter experts (SME) to carry out the mapping, service design, and the subsequent delivery of a solution.

3.24 The areas of focus for 2024/2025 are as follows:

- External-facing processes: service redesign of end-to-end customer-facing services to simplify the process from first contact to delivery, cutting out or automating as much of the process as possible.

- Implement "Warden in My Pocket" concept as an "app-like experience" for report it processes, which will be expanded to cover Apply for it, Book it, Pay for it, Receive it, Check it, Appeal it, Change/Amend it, Tell us about it (compliments and complaints).

- Internal processes: end-to-end review of areas such as HR (sickness reporting, onboarding); finance (purchase to pay, income management, debt management); Freedom of Information and Subject Access Requests; and administration functions such as minute taking, investigation reports, and social worker case notes.

4   Options

4.1   Do nothing. Continue as is with the existing silo working and lack of visibility of end-to-end processes. This option is not advised, as without an overarching view of entire processes, we cannot identify improvements for service users and potential savings for the Council.

4.2   Implement the planned transformation roadmap. Redesigning the services identified on the roadmap will enable us to have an end-to-end view of the journey experienced by our residents and colleagues. This includes identifying the value-adding, and non-value-adding, steps in our processes, allowing us to address issues creatively, including cutting across our traditional service areas. This is the preferred option.

5   Advice and analysis

5.1   It is recommended that we proceed with option 4.2 because we believe that a robust focus on identifying bottlenecks and duplication will highlight the potential for improvement through thinking differently. This approach will require commitment and direction from the Council's leadership, as well as the engagement of all services involved, recognising that a fundamental shift in mindset is required if the Council is to deliver a universal step-change in the way that it operates.

5.2   It is anticipated that redesigning the initial customer journeys with the greatest impact will identify and develop service patterns and technological solutions that are replicable in other service areas across the Council. This will enable us to apply relevant patterns to other processes in years two and three, accelerating the rate of change. For example, a service pattern for reporting an illegally parked vehicle, could be applied to reporting fly-tipping, carriageway defects, and so on. The service/system may be different, but the customer journey should, where possible, feel similar/familiar, regardless of what system is used.

5.3   We are proposing a mix of internal and external process reviews as we have seen that some of our internal processes are driving external (customer-facing) demand for contact. For example, if customers cannot make/receive social care payments due to our internal capacity, they will tend to call the Council to understand why. They will be answered by CABS officers, who may not have access or authority to assist them, which increases frustration.

6   Risk management

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
The Division does not/cannot recruit to the required posts promptly.	Delivery of existing transformation is currently being constrained by available capacity and capability	Job profiles are being developed. Recruitment will be both external and internal, with secondment opportunities offered.	BII
Lack of availability of services involved in the mapping process.	A lack of capacity within services may mean that subject matter experts are not available to participate in service mapping and redesign.	The scheduling of processes and services to be reviewed will take account of imperatives, seasonal demands, and where necessary, will escalate to CMT for direction.	AIII
The transformation roadmap focusses solely on in-year savings.	There is a risk that if we target immediate/short-term savings by "salami slicing" or applying arbitrary savings targets, we will miss the opportunity to delivery longer-term sustainability and resilience.	The proposed roadmap has built in a discovery phase to identify, and quantify, long-term savings, which can be planned and agreed with services, cutting across financial years.	CII
Prioritisation of processes	Criteria and rationale for selection of areas to be reviewed and redesigned may not be clear.	A robust definition of the criteria and thresholds for selecting candidate business flows for further development will be agreed.	CIII

For risk rating, please refer to the following table:

Likelihood	Impact:
A Very likely B Likely C Unlikely D Rare	I Catastrophic II Major III Moderate IV Minor

7   Consultation

7.1   Formal consultation is not required at this stage. However, any services undergoing mapping and redesign will be informed, involved, and consulted with at all stages, as they are considered the subject matter experts.

7.2   Consultation with residents and users will be carried out where appropriate depending on the scale of the potential change.

7.3   Staff and residents will be invited to participate in user testing where appropriate.

7.4　It is proposed that the Chief Information Officer establishes a new cross-party "Member User Testing Group" to allow Councillors to experience and beta-test new services that have been developed.

8　Climate change implications

8.1　[The Council declared a climate change emergency in April 2019](#) and has set a target for Medway to become carbon neutral by 2050.

8.2　The declaration fits into the Council Plan priority of making Medway a place to be proud of; the main outcome being a clean and green environment.

8.3　A Climate Change action plan has been developed (www.medway.gov.uk/climatechangeplan), informed by the Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy, to ensure Medway is on a pathway to achieve its net zero carbon ambitions.

8.4　The action plan is shaped by 11 priority areas including Priority 6 – Transport, Travel and Digital Connectivity.

8.5　Digital connectivity has a vital role to play in reducing emissions from travel. The technologies developed as part of this transformation roadmap can help us to better manage energy usage and optimise our environments. Specific processes have been identified to utilise technology to reduce the amount of printing and paper usage throughout the Council, which will be built into any service redesign.

9　Financial implications

9.1　The 2024/25 budget build includes a provision of £1m for Council-wide transformation work, including Medway 2.0.

9.2　A draft proposal of how this £1m should be allocated was presented to CMT on 15 May 2024 and it was agreed that CMT would control the spend from this budget to ensure that it addresses corporate priorities.

9.3　On 15 May 2024, CMT approved £420,000 to be spent on the Service Redesign workstream described within this report to accelerate the work on Medway 2.0 and support the savings targets within the FIT Plan.

9.4　This funding will provide additional resource, capacity, and capability in the following areas:

- Business Analysts – we aim to recruit an additional 2.5 FTE Business Analysts to accelerate the discovery work with services on the candidate processes identified in Appendix 1. This work will involve mapping current "as is" processes, quantifying demand and volumes of works, identifying time spent on work, identify value adding/non-value adding activities and gathering business requirements.

- Service Designers – we aim to recruit an additional 3 FTE Service Designers. This crucial role will use recognised service design principles to reshape the as-is processes described above so that the customer journey is simpler and help people to do what they set out to do, easily, with the minimum number of steps and handoffs.

- Power Platform Developer – we aim to recruit a technical specialist that can support with maximising the investment the Council has already made with Microsoft

technologies to enable automation, development of apps, implementation of virtual agents/chat bots, and use of artificial intelligence where appropriate.

- Budget for specialist consultancy and development support. We have included resource to ensure that our various systems are integrated and support *our* service design, rather than us having to accommodate restrictive legacy systems and applications, as described in section 3.16 above.

9.5   The 2024/25 budget build also includes a corporate transformation savings target of £2.15m. Whilst a programme of projects could be developed that focuses on achieving immediate savings to meet this target, there is a danger that this could result in "salami slicing" or uncoordinated vacancy reductions, rather than long-term, sustainable, transformation that could yield further savings over a number of years.

9.6   The Medway 2.0 transformation roadmap and approach described in this report is designed to mitigate this risk and break the cycle of focusing on immediate in-year savings and takes a longer-term sustainable approach which will increase our resilience both financially and with regards to resources.

10   Legal implications

10.1   There are no legal implications as a result of this report.

10.2   Any legal implications arising from redesigning services will be raised with legal where appropriate throughout the duration of the roadmap.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Candidate Processes for Discovery and Mapping

Background papers

None