

# Cheshire East Council

## Cheshire West and Chester Council

### Shared Services Joint Committee

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**Date of Meeting:** 24th November 2023

**Report Title:** The Future Model for ICT: Programme Gemini Update

**Senior Officer:** Alex Thompson, Director of Finance and Customer Services,  
Cheshire East Council.

Laurence Ainsworth, Director of Public Service Reform, Cheshire  
West and Chester Council.

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#### **1 Report Summary**

1.1 This report provides a summary of the progress to date on the Hybrid ICT programme following decisions to proceed with a new service model.

#### **2 Recommendations**

2.1 That the Shared Services Joint Committee note the latest update on the Hybrid ICT Programme.

#### **3 Reasons for Recommendations**

3.1 The Shared Service Joint Committee have agreed to receive regular updates on the progress of the programme to provide transparent oversight and accountability.

#### **4 Background**

4.1 Following comprehensive joint work by both organisations, on 26th January 2023 Shared Services Joint Committee recommended that their constituent councils proceed with a hybrid model for ICT. This involves retaining a shared network and data centre and a separation of other ICT functions that are currently shared.

4.2 The recommendation to move to a new model for ICT Services was agreed at Cheshire East Councils Corporate Policy Committee on February 9<sup>th</sup> 2023, and Cheshire West and Chester Cabinet on February 8<sup>th</sup> 2023.

- 4.3 It was agreed that the Shared Service Joint Committee will play a key role in providing oversight throughout the programme over the next two years and that a joint scrutiny task group should also be established.

## **5 Progress update**

- 5.1 Following the update at the Shared Services Joint Committee on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2023, an update of progress since June 2023 to November 2023 is set out below.
- 5.2 The programme overall has made significant progress in this last period with all key partners in place, effective governance helping to drive activities and manage risks and both councils' future designs nearing completion.
- 5.3 As with all complex programmes, management of risks and issues effectively is vital. During this period an issue related to resourcing of the workforce workstream impacted progress, through established governance this issue is now resolved and additional resources are in place to mitigate delays.
- 5.4 Through the strategic intent in both councils and the move towards more applications being delivered as software as a service delivery, and the need to move towards a modern infrastructure for networks, it is recognised that there is a need to understand its implications and longer term future of our agreed model. This review is now underway and will be reported back to shared services joint committee through these regular reports.
- 5.5 The programme status is Green overall which means the programme is on track to deliver and remains within programme tolerances.
- 5.6 Progress against the workstreams and themes of the programme is outlined below:

### **Workforce**

- 5.7 The ICT workforce remain regularly communicated and engaged with via managers and through programme mechanisms such as the regular Staff Questions and Answer sessions focussed on the programme. The last event took place on September 28<sup>th</sup> and had attendance of over 90 staff, the next session is scheduled for November 30<sup>th</sup>.
- 5.8 All questions and answers are published in a shared environment for all staff to see and each session is recorded and published also so all members of the ICT workforce have the opportunity to understand the latest progress.

- 5.9 In this period a staff poll was completed to name the programme, The workforce chose 'Gemini' to be its name moving forward.
- 5.10 Trade unions have also been updated on September 28<sup>th</sup> and will remain regularly engaged. Further engagement and consultation are planned with Trade Unions at key points throughout the programme.

### **Governance**

- 5.11 A joint scrutiny task group consisting of six councillors (three representing Cheshire West and Chester Council and 3 representing Cheshire East Council) met on October 4<sup>th</sup> 2023
- 5.12 The working groups first meeting focussed on:
- the application of lessons learned from previous programmes into the Gemini programme.
  - programme controls and methodology.
  - progress against the plan.
- 5.13 Working group members fed back at the meeting that this was a valuable exercise and provided a level of assurance that that the programme team are capturing lessons learnt and have robust controls in place however members would like more focus on programme finances and milestones moving forward.
- 5.14 The Councils internal audit teams have been proactively engaged in the programme and are auditing progress as the programme reaches key gateways to ensure programme controls remain effective.
- 5.15 A Business Design Authority continues to oversee any changes to the ICT landscape in terms of people, processes and technology interdependencies with the programme.

### **Technical**

- 5.16 The procurement process for a technical partner has now successfully completed.
- 5.17 Discovery workshops have started and will continue to take place over November and December, these will shape the build of the new Cheshire West and Chester environment, define a migration plan which will move all users into this new tenancy and identify opportunities to refine the Cheshire East environment.

5.18 Work is continuing with the internal teams to design and build the new tenancy based on best practice. The final design stages have all been initiated and remain on track to support the migration activities.

## 6 Design

6.1 Both councils have completed more detailed future designs that align to their individual organisations strategic direction. This includes potential organisational structures. The designs will go through final iterations over the coming months to support future engagement with the workforce and skills development planning.

## 7 Programme Milestones

7.1 There are a number of workstreams within the programme which have key milestones that reflect important points of delivery.

7.2 The milestone delivery table below outlines these:

<b>Workstream</b>	<b><u>Milestone Delivery Table</u></b> <b>Milestone</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>	<b>Status</b>
Mobilisation	Initiation	Jun-23	Complete
Mobilisation	Establish governance and programme controls	Jun-23	Complete
Technology Change	Procure an external Technology Partner	Sep-23	Complete
Technology Change	Options appraisal data centre and networks	Feb-24	Underway
Technology Change	Establish new O365 Tenancy	Dec-23	Underway
Technology Change	Migration to new O365 Tenancy complete	Aug-24	Underway
Workforce Change	Confirm HR policy framework to be applied to transition of staff	Dec-23	Underway
Workforce Change	Define and deliver process to transition staff to CWC and CE services	May-24	Underway
Workforce Change	Skills analysis and development plan	May-24	Underway

Design	Initial design of CWC and CE separated services	Nov-23	Complete
Design	Establish shadow management arrangements	Mar-24	Planning
Design	Retained shared service model design and costs	May-24	Underway
Design	Performance management framework and SLAs	Oct-24	Yet to be initiated
Design	Process definitions between ICT services	Oct-24	Yet to be initiated
Formalisation	Shared Service agreement	Nov-24	Yet to be initiated
Formalisation	Soft launch of new service model	Dec-24	Yet to be initiated
Formalisation	Formal Disaggregation of staff	Mar-25	Yet to be initiated

7.3 A full programme plan is in place and a key programme control is that this is regularly updated to reflect current positions and known issues, the plan is an active document and evolves through out the programmes lifecycle.

## 8 Programme Budget

8.1 The programme budget for 23/24 is £2.47m, the current forecast at October is £1.51m.

8.2 The associated benefits of the combined £2.67m saving (Revenue and Capital) will be assured following final design refinements taking place over November.

## 9 Risks and Issues

9.1 As part of the mobilisation activities an updated Risk and Issues log is being populated to reflect the current position and future focus of the programme.

9.2 The top 3 key risks identified are:

Theme	Risk	Mitigation
Workforce skills and capacity	The two new ICT services and retained shared service will not have the right level of skills and capacity to operate sustainably on day one.	<p>An early and on-going assessment of capability gaps as part of the organisational development strategy for the programme will be completed to indicate the nature of the gap, implications for service delivery and business continuity and target early specialist recruitment where necessary.</p> <p>The lead-in to the transition gives sufficient time to create strategies for targeting and resolving skills and capacity gaps.</p>
Workforce	Staff will be unsettled through the transition or unhappy with the disaggregation outcome leading to challenges of retention & recruitment & impact on service delivery	<p>Continuous engagement with staff will remain throughout</p> <p>Early and continued engagement and full and meaningful consultation with trade unions</p> <p>The transition will create new opportunities for staff and both councils will commit to support and development.</p> <p>More opportunities will be available for current workforce.</p> <p>Focus on developing current workforce into new roles and skills.</p> <p>Clear visions for ICT in each Council.</p> <p>Joint approach to recruitment for existing vacancies to mitigate redundancies.</p>
Finance - Benefit	There is a risk that baseline data used to build benefits is inaccurate.	<p>Programme finance needs to be reviewed against deliverables and workstreams. Review proposed benefits against the design, plan and budget.</p> <p>The Service baseline has moved on since due diligence by the internal team was undertaken. Initial design modelling will need to be reworked against a refreshed baseline to assess any impact.</p>

## **10 Implications of the Recommendations**

### *10.1 Legal Implications*

Discussion was held on legal support for the programme, particularly to support new contractual arrangement and the new shared service agreement.

### *10.2 Finance Implications*

A £5.1m overall programme budget has been agreed, projected benefits are £2.67m combined, payback period is 4 years. Regular reports on programme finances will feature through Members governance as the programme progresses.

### *10.3 Policy Implications*

The new hybrid model will be aligned to each councils' policies. Common ICT policies will be agreed for the retained shared service.

### *10.4 Equality Implications*

There are no direct Equality implications at this stage.

### *10.5 Human Resources Implications*

Implications for Human Resources will be managed by the workforce workstream and will be a critical part of the programme. Engagement with workforce will continue throughout the programme. In addition, a joint session with the Trade Unions are planned throughout the programme and will become a regular working group.

### *10.6 Risk Management Implications*

A full risk log is being formed and will be reported to Members of the Committee on a regular basis from June.

### *10.7 Rural Communities Implications*

ICT supports all priorities and communities, and it is important that successful delivery of the service is achieved.

### *10.8 Implications for Children & Young People/Cared for Children*

ICT supports all priorities and communities, and it is important that successful delivery of the service is achieved.

### *10.9 Public Health Implications*

ICT supports all priorities and communities, and it is important that successful delivery of the service is achieved.

### *10.10 Climate Change Implications*

ICT supports all priorities and communities, and it is important that successful delivery of the service is achieved.

#### 10.11 *Ward Members Affected*

This report relates to Shared Services that operate across both CE and CWC, therefore all wards are affected in both Councils.

### 11 Access to Information

Documents are available for inspection at:

Cheshire East Democratic Services  
Westfields, Middlewich Road  
Sandbach  
CW11 1HZ

or:

Cheshire West & Chester Democratic Services  
HQ Building, Nicholas Street,  
Chester,  
CH1 2NP

### 8. Contact Information

Any questions relating to this report should be directed to the following officer:

Name        Gareth Pawlett  
Job Title    Chief Information Officer  
E Mail       [gareth.pawlett@cheshireeast.gov.uk](mailto:gareth.pawlett@cheshireeast.gov.uk)

Name:        Peter Lloyd  
Job Title:    Head of Transformation and Technology  
Email:        [peter.lloyd@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk](mailto:peter.lloyd@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk)