

REPORT TO CABINET

Open/Exempt		Would any decisions proposed :			
Any especially affected Wards	Mandatory/	Be entirely within Cabinet's powers to decide		YES/ NO	
	Discretionary-/	Need to be recommendations to Council		YES/NO	
	Operational	Is it a Key Decision		YES/NO	
Lead Member: Cllr Alistair Beales, Leader E-mail: cllr.alistair.beales@west-norfolk.gov.uk		Other Cabinet Members consulted: Cabinet			
		Other Members consulted: Corporate Performance Panel			
Lead Officer: Kate Blakemore, Chief Executive Officer E-mail: kate.blakemore@west-norfolk.gov.uk Direct Dial:		Other Officers consulted: Corporate Leadership Team Greg Pearson – LGR Policy Officer			
Financial Implications YES/NO	Policy/ Personnel Implications YES/ NO	Statutory Implications YES/NO	Equal Impact Assessment YES/NO If YES: Pre-screening/ Full Assessment	Risk Management Implications YES/ NO	Environmental Considerations YES/NO
If not for publication, the paragraph(s) of Schedule 12A of the 1972 Local Government Act considered to justify that is (are) paragraph(s)					

Date of meeting: 20 January 2026

TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION READINESS

Summary

In January 2025, Cabinet resolved to establish a Transformation Board to oversee the council's Transformation Programme which consisted of three key pillars of transformational change:

- Organisational Development
- Service Innovation and Digital Transformation
- Enterprising our Assets

The projects within our Transformation Programme were established to support the overarching Corporate Strategy. In July 2025, Cabinet endorsed our updated two-year action plan which outlined our key priorities and actions to achieve the strategic outcomes defined in the Corporate Strategy, taking us to 2027 when a shadow unitary council will be established following Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

The Transformation Programme is designed to transform the council to a modern, agile organisation, harnessing modern technology and giving our staff the resources to deliver much needed services to our communities more efficiently. This outcome remains of key importance to the council as we move towards LGR.

Alongside our Transformation Programme, we have been working on a programme of projects which will prepare our organisation, staff, and place for LGR. It is clear there are significant synergies between the projects defined within the Transformation Programme and our LGR Readiness Plan. Consequently, it is recommended that the transformation programme is redefined to an 'LGR Readiness Programme' to align our key programmes of work under transformation and LGR readiness in one governance framework, recognising the importance of our transformation programme to our organisation alongside our work to prepare for LGR.

Recommendation

Cabinet is asked to endorse the Transformation Programme is redefined the 'LGR Readiness Programme'.

Cabinet Resolves:

- To agree that the Transformation Programme is redefined as the 'LGR Readiness Programme'
- That the governance framework which supports the Transformation Programme continues to monitor the workstreams, key objectives and outputs from projects identified under LGR Readiness and Transformation.
- That reporting on progress, operational readiness and any issues and risks arising will continue via the Transformation Board, Corporate Performance Panel and Cabinet.

Reason for Decision

To recognise the synergy between the LGR Readiness programme and our Transformation Programme and to utilise the established formal governance framework for the delivery and monitoring of the LGR Readiness programme within the Transformation Programme, delivering defined outcomes through effective management and oversight.

1 Background

1.1 In January 2025, Cabinet resolved to establish a Transformation Board to oversee the Council's Transformation Programme. The Transformation Programme consists of three key pillars of transformational change:

- Organisational Development
- Service Innovation and Digital Transformation
- Enterprising our Assets

1.2 The pillars of change are underpinned by cross cutting themes led by a Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) by which each of the projects within the pillar are assessed against. The cross-cutting themes are:

- Financial sustainability
- Governance
- Communication

- Equality/Diversity and Inclusion
- Climate Action

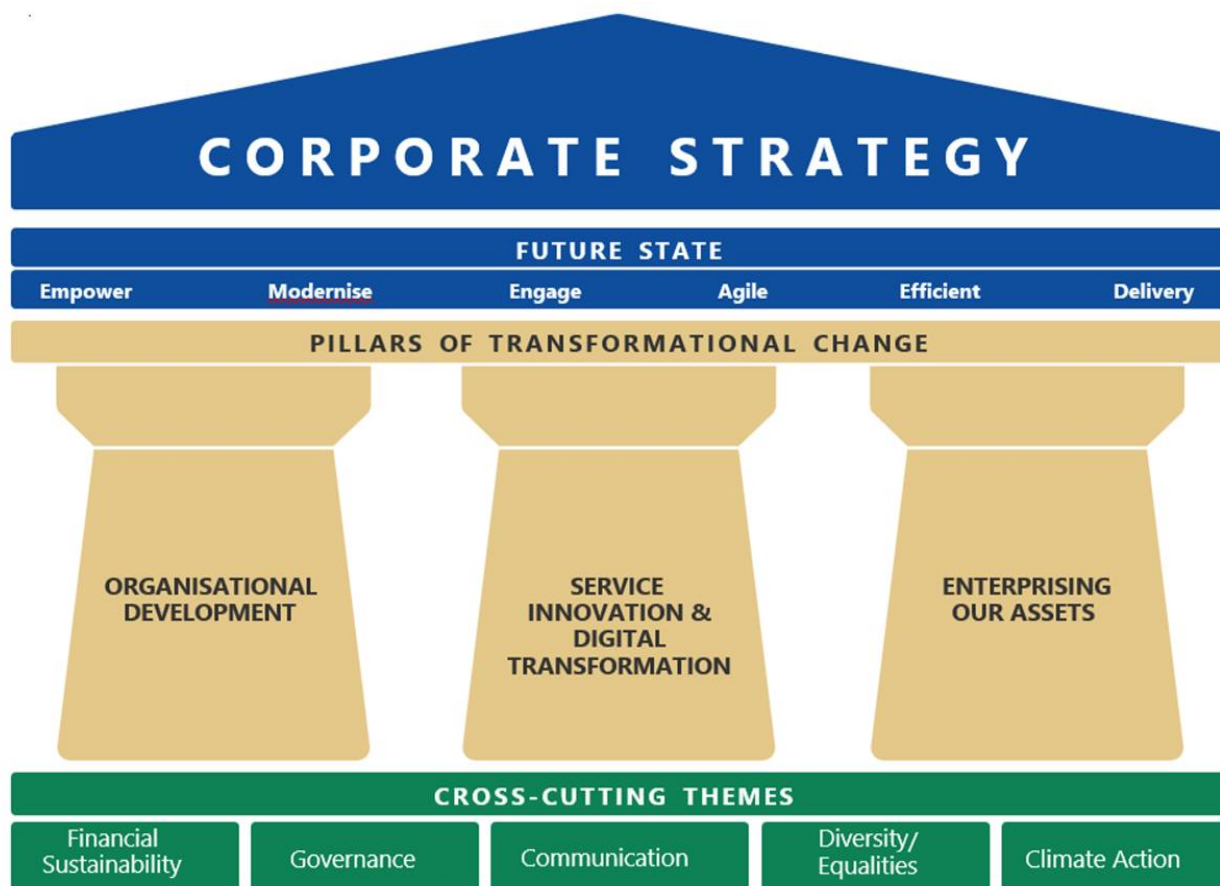


Fig.1 – Transformation Programme

2.0 Transformation and LGR Readiness

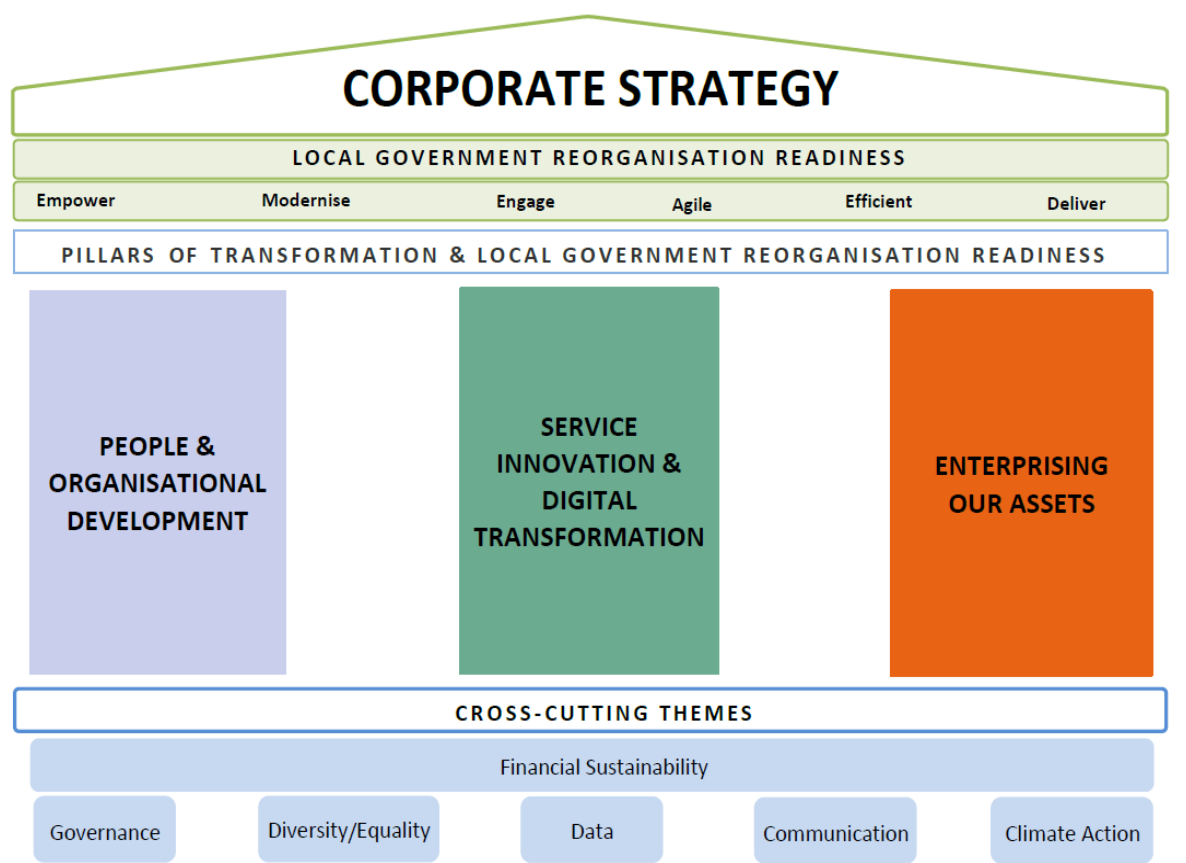
- 2.1 The Transformation Programme is progressing well with projects reporting progress against anticipated timelines and deliverables. Progress is reported to the Transformation Board, Corporate Performance Panel and Cabinet quarterly.
- 2.2 The projects within our Transformation Programme were established to support the overarching Corporate Strategy. In July 2025, Cabinet endorsed our updated two-year action plan which outlined our key priorities and actions to achieve the strategic outcomes defined in the Corporate Strategy, taking us to 2027 when a shadow unitary council will be stood up.
- 2.3 The Transformation Programme is designed to transform the council to a modern, agile organisation, harnessing modern technology and giving our staff the resources to deliver much needed services to our communities more efficiently.

- 2.3 Following the submission of the business case for three unitary councils in Norfolk, alongside our Transformation Programme, we have been developing our 'LGR Readiness' Programme to prepare the organisation, our staff, communities and members for LGR. This work has been running parallel to our transformation programme.
- 2.4 LGR is a large and complex programme of work. The council as we know it will cease to exist and will be replaced by either one, two or three unitary councils. It is the largest change to the way local services are delivered to our residents in over 50 years and will result in staff transferring to a new unitary authority. We cannot underestimate the amount of work required to prepare the organisation, our staff, and members for reorganisation for this change and it is vital we make sure we allocate sufficient resource and capacity to support the delivery of this programme.
- 2.5 We have identified a range of outcomes and outputs for our LGR Readiness Programme and the key workstreams are:
- Strategy, politics, and external engagement
 - Organisational readiness
 - Data
 - People
 - Stakeholder Communications
 - Programme Management

Each of the workstreams have been allocated a Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) and have Project Initiation Documents and project plans assigned to them.

3. Proposal

- 4.1 It is clear there are significant synergies between the projects defined within the Transformation Programme and our LGR Readiness Plan. The Transformation Programme remains highly relevant and needs to be aligned with our work on LGR Readiness. Following a review, it is recommended that the transformation programme is redefined to an 'LGR Readiness Programme' to align our various programmes of work under one governance framework. This will avoid duplication and provide members and the Transformation Board with assurance and reporting of outcomes and progress against the outputs and outcomes identified.
- 4.2 To reflect the proposed change to the Transformation Programme, the Transformation Diagram has been updated to reflect the inclusion of LGR Readiness. Data has been added to the cross-cutting themes as a key area of the LGR Readiness programme.



5. Governance and reporting

- 5.1 Due to the significant areas of crossover within the workstreams identified for the LGR Readiness and Transformation Programme, the proposal is to 'rebrand' our current Transformation Programme to the 'LGR Readiness Programme' and to use the existing governance framework established to monitor and review the progress of the programme. The Transformation Board was established to provide member oversight of the Transformation Programme along with the usual performance monitoring framework of the quarterly reports to Corporate Performance Panel and Cabinet.
- 5.2 As part of the ongoing project assurance framework, highlight reports on the progress of the LGR Readiness Programme and transformation projects will be presented to the Transformation Board by the Senior Responsible Officers. The highlight reports will provide an overview of the actions conducted in the previous quarter, outline the actions and priorities for the next quarter, provide updates on outcomes, risks and risk mitigation.
- 5.3 By using the existing established governance framework, this will reduce duplication in the reporting of the various workstreams within the LGR Readiness programme and retain the focus on both LGR Readiness and the Transformation Programme.
- 5.4 It is important to note the timeline for LGR and how the programme fits into this. We are due to receive the 'minded to' decision from MHCLG at the end of March

2026. Regardless of the outcome of that decision, the work to prepare the council for LGR is essential to ensure the organisation, our staff and members are in the best position to manage the transition to a unitary authority. Similarly, if LGR is delayed for any reason, the work is important to the organisation and will not be wasted. The improvements and investment in our staff, our ICT and systems and our data is fundamental to transforming the council to a modern and agile organisation.

6. Conclusions and Next Steps

- 6.1 Following the publishing of the Governments Devolution White Paper in December 2024 and the inclusion of Norfolk and Suffolk on the Devolution Priority Programme, we have reviewed the transformation programme in the context of the work required to ensure the council is ready for the significant impact and change LGR will bring. Regardless of the model of unitary authorities implemented in Norfolk, the council, its staff and members will enter a period of unprecedented change and it is essential we are prepared for that.
- 6.2 With Cabinet approval, the transformation programme will be rebranded the LGR Readiness Programme. A communication plan to update all staff and members on this change will be prepared. The Transformation Board will become the LGR Readiness Board, and the first highlight reports will be presented to the Board in March 2026.

7. Options Considered

- 7.1 Consideration was given to running both the Transformation Programme and the LGR Readiness Programme in parallel. This would have resulted in significant duplication of work and effort as key areas of both programmes of work, most notably the People and Asset Management aspects have significant overlap. It is considered that the most efficient way of managing both areas of work is to combine the LGR Readiness Programme with the existing Transformation Programme and use the established governance framework and the Transformation Board oversight to provide assurance to members that the outputs and outcome identified are progressing.

8 Policy Implications

- 8.1 There are no policy implications.

9. Financial Implications

- 9.1 There are no direct financial implications from the redesignation of the Transformation Programme to an LGR Readiness Programme.

10. Personnel Implications

- 10.1 There are no direct personnel implications. The LGR Readiness Programme is managed within the Transformation and Change Directorate and resource has

been allocated from the Project Management Office to carry out project and programme management. Senior Responsible Officers from the Corporate Leadership Team have been allocated to oversee the workstreams within the LGR Readiness Programme.

11 Environmental Considerations

- 11. There are no environmental considerations.

12 Statutory Considerations

- 12.1 There are no statutory considerations.

13 Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

- 13.1 Pre screening proforma attached. There are no equality impacts.

14. Risk Management Implications

- 14.1 The council, as part of the Future Norfolk group of district councils submitted their business case for local government reorganisation in September 2025. The government is expected to announce the future model of unitary councils in Norfolk in March 2026. In the intervening months, the council has established a significant programme of work to become 'LGR Ready'. The projects include people, data, governance, communications as well as continuing to engage with all other Norfolk Districts and the County Council.
- 14.2 In addition to LGR, the council is undergoing a significant period of transformation and the projects remain extremely relevant and key to the organisational improvement and efficiency. Workstreams include organisational development, improvements to our ICT systems and infrastructure, an Asset Management Strategy and work to improve our working environment. Resources have been allocated to work on these projects alongside business as usual. By combining both key areas of work, it's anticipated that duplication across workstreams will be reduced, and priorities are identified early where resource needs to be allocated.
- 14.3 The 'LGR Readiness Programme' will have a detailed risk register and mitigation plan which will be presented to the Transformation Steering Group on a quarterly basis.

15 Declarations of Interest / Dispensations Granted

- 15.1 None.

16 Background Papers

- 16.1 [Transformation Programme Cabinet Report](#)

Stage 1 - Pre-Screening Equality Impact Assessment

For equalities profile information please visit [Norfolk Insight - Demographics and Statistics - Data Observatory](#)

Name of policy/service/function	Transformation Programme and LGR Readiness				
Is this a new or existing policy/service/function? (tick as appropriate)	New	☒	Existing		
Brief summary/description of the main aims of the policy/service/function being screened. Please state if this policy/service is rigidly constrained by statutory obligations, and identify relevant legislation.	Refocus the Transformation Programme to an LGR Readiness Programme due to the overlap of priorities within both programmes of change and transformation.				
Who has been consulted as part of the development of the policy/service/function? – new only (identify stakeholders consulted with)	Transformation Board. LGR Steering Group and the Corporate Leadership Team				
Question	Answer				
1. Is there any reason to believe that the policy/service/function could have a specific impact on people from one or more of the following groups, for example, because they have particular needs, experiences, issues or priorities or in terms of ability to access the service? Please tick the relevant box for each group. NB. Equality neutral means no negative impact on any group. <i>If potential adverse impacts are identified, then a full Equality Impact Assessment (Stage 2) will be required.</i>		Positive	Negative	Neutral	Unsure
	Age			☒	
	Disability			☒	
	Sex			☒	
	Gender Re-assignment			☒	
	Marriage/civil partnership			☒	
	Pregnancy & maternity			☒	
	Race			☒	
	Religion or belief			☒	
	Sexual orientation			☒	
	Armed forces community			☒	
	Care leavers			☒	
	Other (eg low income, caring responsibilities)			☒	

