

Suffolk Unitary Authority (including Lowestoft)
Implementation Plan

1 Purpose of this document

- 1.1 This Implementation plan describes the activities that will need to be undertaken to ensure Unitary Suffolk Council is able to operate effectively from the 1st April 2010, and to deliver the benefits set out in the business case.

2 Principles of Implementation and transition

- 2.1 In order to achieve the objectives of Unitary Suffolk, it is important that the resources available to support the Implementation are deployed effectively across a broad range of activities. This is a complex process and it is essential that a focus on the important issues is maintained. The principles which underpin the transition and implementation are detailed in figure one.

Figure one – Principles of Implementation and transition

Services to Customers

As a minimum, service standards and quality must be maintained throughout the transition period & will then start improving

Financial Control

A tight grip must be maintained on the finances throughout the transition period – both transitional costs and operational costs

Keep it simple

The transition plan must be simple to understand so that stakeholders can grasp (at-a-glance) what needs to be done and when

Communicate

We must keep stakeholders and staff involved and informed of progress

Data quality

We must seek to improve data quality & integrity throughout the transition process

Knowledge Transfer

Knowledge transfer must be managed effectively

Learning from the Best

We must use best practice from across Suffolk and nationally & build on it

People

We must treat people fairly

Risk Management

We must manage risk effectively and where necessary take calculated risks

Project Management

Implementation must be managed through robust programme management

3 Governance arrangements for the transition.

3.1 The transition will be delivered through 6 workstreams as illustrated in figure 2 below.

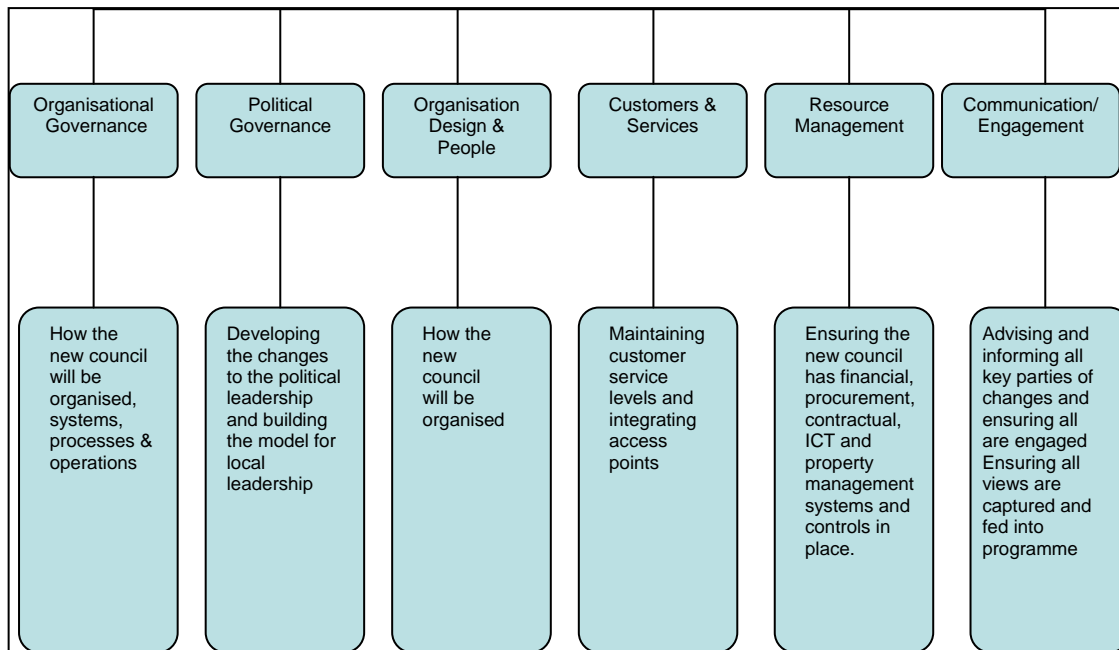


Figure 2 – Transitional workstreams

3.2 The transition and implementation process will be led by a Director of Implementation, supported by a dedicated team. The costs of this team have been included in the financial business case.

4 Action Plans for the transition workstreams

4.1 It is important to recognise that many of the identified activities are critical 'must do', and are essential for the smooth transition from eight separate authorities into one.

4.2 Appendix One details the timeline for the key elements of the workstream. Appendix Two details some of the specific tasks which will need to be undertaken during the transition. A comprehensive plan will be prepared prior to implementation.

5 Cost of Transition and Implementation

5.1 The costs of transition and implementation have been calculated at £25.5M and are contained within the financial business case. These costs are forecast to be recovered within a year of implementation.

Unitary Suffolk: Transition Phase

Organisational Governance **April 2009**  **March 2010**

Modelling the Council Design (functional) - People, Place, Prosperity, Enabling	April - May 2009	
Building processes to support organisational design and performance management		June 2009 - February 2010

Political Governance

Developing political / democratic arrangements (Constitution, Councillor Framework, role, remuneration, register of electors.....)	April - July 2009	
Implementing arrangements		August 2009 - March 2010

Organisation Design & People

Design people transition process	April - May 2009	
Appoint Chief Exec and Directors		June 2009 - February 2010
Design and implement transition for each service		May 2009 - March 2010
Develop and implement HR systems and processes		May 2009 - March 2010
Develop change management framework	April - May 2009	
Change management support		June 2009 - February 2010
Continuous internal consultation, engagement and communication		April 2009 - March 2010

Customers and Services

Develop front line service designs for transition	April - June 2009	
Initiate and implement		July 2009 - March 2010
Design new governance arrangements	April - September 2009	
Plan and implement		September - December 2009
Develop customer contact and corporate support service designs - including local centres	April - July 2009	
Implement customer contact and corporate support service designs - including local centres		August 2009 - March 2010

Resource Management

Develop financial accounting strategy and plan	April - May 2009	
Implement financial accountancy transition plan		June 2009 - March 2010
Develop Council budgets		April 2009 - January 2010
Plan and implement financial closedown of outgoing authorities		October 2009 - March 2010
Develop ICT strategy and transition plan	April - July 2009	
Implement ICT transition plan		August 2009 - March 2010
Develop property and assets strategy	April - May 2009	
Implement property and assets strategy		June 2009 - February 2010
Develop aggregation plans	April - May 2009	
Implement decommissioning and aggregation		June 2009 - December 2009

Communication / Engagement

Design brand for new council	April - June 2009	
Implement brand		July 2009 - March 2010
Programme of external communications including web		April 2009 - January 2010
Engagement with community groups town and parish councils, business regarding community boards		April - December 2009
Establish community boards		October 2009 - March 2010

Action Plan One : Political Governance
 Developing the changes to the political leadership and building the model for local leadership

Action
Establish Implementation Executive
Formally establish implementation team (officers)
Appoint Monitoring Officer
Establish scrutiny arrangement for implementation executive
Hold Election
Draft and agree new constitution including scheme of delegation, financial rules and regulations
Induct new members
Identify Priorities for Suffolk Unitary Authority
Design and compose Executive & scrutiny committees and regulatory committees e.g. audit committee
Ensure that appropriate level and scope of decision making is delegated to the executive within the council's overall constitution
Establish the membership, geographical boundaries, clarify role, remit and support for locality boards
Establish civic and ceremonial arrangements
Establish committee operating procedures: scrutiny protocols, working procedures and call in arrangements
Establish other committees: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning and regulatory committees • Corporate parenting committee • Pension Fund committee • Statement of accounts sub committee
Design organisational structure & service configuration
Establish a corporate planning framework for the new authority
Adopt 2010/11 budget
Set council tax rates
Disband Implementation Executive

Action Plan two : Organisational Design and Governance

How the new council will be organised, systems, processes & operations

Action
Prepare Terms of Reference for political governance committees
Prepare scheme of delegation
Corporate Health and Safety Plan to be in place
Prepare a list of proper officers that the council is required by statute to appoint
Develop strategic Risk register for new organisation
Imbed Equalities and diversity into organisational processes.
Establish Relationships with key partners: Partners Voluntary Sector & LSPs
Voluntary and community sector engagement
Establish business continuity arrangements
Establish performance management mechanisms
Develop Voluntary Sector protocol and policy

Action Plan three: Organisational Design and People

How the new council will be organised

Action
Agree union consultation protocol
Standardise terms and conditions
Standardise HR policies
Agree retention policy
Develop redundancy and recruitment policies
Agree collaborative working policy
Agree approach to staff training, development and PDR
Design New organisational structure
Launch new organisational structure
Undertake staff consultation on new structure (supported by communications strategy)
Transfer staff to new structure
Implement recruitment protocol
Agree remuneration policy
Pay harmonisation
Embed equalities and diversity standards and procedures into the new Council

Action Plan Four : Resource Management

Ensuring the new council has financial, procurement and ICT systems and controls in place and is developing a strategy for the property portfolio

Action
Finance
Designate a section 151 officer
Prepare a Financial Framework (rules as part of constitution)
Prepare budget strategy and supporting budgetary controls
Establish core financial systems (e.g. Oracle)
Consolidate Payroll systems
Test Payroll System
Pay First Payroll
Close & Set up Bank accounts
Financial stationery and systems amended and issued (e.g. Council Tax Billing)
Establishing a single accounts payable system
Inform suppliers of changes to billing details
Agree single protocol for Tax and VAT
Consolidate Accounts receivable and details of debtors to be tracked
Inform customers of changes to billing statement and bank account details
Prepare and issue Financial procedures
Arrange for Council tax to be collected on day 1
Ensure Insurance Cover is in place
Treasury Management Arrangements
Liaison with external auditors & other regulatory bodies
Revenues and Benefits
Council Tax billing and collection – ensure customers can pay bills on day 1
Business rate billing and collection - ensure customers can pay bills on day 1
Council tax and business rate benefits and exemptions
Consolidate systems
Procurement
Agree spend categories and sub-categories
Draft contract procedure rules
Consolidate electronic pay to procure systems
Agree contract register format
Develop contracts register
Identify contracts needing urgent attention and agree plan: Business critical / Still required and due for expiry
Triage contracts and agree plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can be terminated or allowed to wither• Only relevant to one council and can be novated• Need to be split
Identify shared suppliers and contract duplication and make plans to exploit
Consolidation of Procurement procedures and practices
Renegotiate / novate major contracts

ICT
Develop a corporate wide IT strategy
Establish bridging arrangements for a whole Council Network
Ensure all staff & members have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • login • access and permissions • email arrangements • security e.g. virus • access to an ICT support desk • operational telephones
Baseline existing ICT contracts for software maintenance and hardware
Assign contracts to new legal entity
Prepare disaster recovery plan
Establish remote working arrangements for members and staff
Property & Asset Management
standardising the approach to charges, concessions, debts and arrears.
Archiving of non electronic information
Establish a consolidated asset management
Update inventories
Establish property strategy
Identify, vacate and dispose of buildings surplus to requirements
Information Management
Establish corporate filing structure
Establish arrangements for Freedom of Information requests

Action plan five: Communication and Engagement

Advising and informing all key parties of changes and ensuring all are engaged.
Establishing the identify of the new authority

Action

- Develop and implement Internal Communications plan
- Develop and implement External Communications plan
- Develop culture and identity
- Branding - design and launch, including livery
- Promotion and Launch of new Council

Action Plan six: Customers

Maintaining customer service levels whilst integrating access points

Action

- identify service integration and consolidation
- design shape of new services
- gather data (PI's and customer information)
- Integrate services