

Swindon 2028 Transformation Plan – Case for Change

Cabinet

Date: 9th July 2025

Lead Member:	Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Organisational Oversight
Lead Officer:	Sonia Grewal, Chief Operating Officer
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Wards:	All Wards
Parishes Affected:	All Parish Areas

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This report provides an update to Cabinet on current activity against the Swindon 2028 transformation programme and the progress that has been made towards the design for a new Council operating model to support a fairer, better, and greener Swindon.

2. Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to:

- 2.1 Agree that the Council should continue progressing the current transformation workstreams and activities as part of the Swindon 2028 programme.
- 2.2 Confirm its support for the Case for Change.
- 2.3 Agree that the Council proceeds to the next stage of development of the programme and endorses the current approach.

3. Detail

Current transformation activity and next phase

- 3.1 The current transformation activity is concentrated in four core areas:
- Commissioning, procurement and contract management
 - Housing, care and homelessness
 - Estates & Assets
 - Data and digital transformation
- 3.2 Across these areas, 26 specific opportunities are being explored, with business cases in development to assess potential benefits. These cases are expected to be reviewed over the summer, with implementation starting from September 2025.

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- 3.3 In parallel, the design of our Future Council Operating Model is being completed. This will set a blueprint for how Swindon Borough Council will work differently in future. This model will guide long-term change across services, people, systems and decision-making.
- 3.4 Together, the workstreams and the Future Operating Model form the core of the transformation programme, aligned with the missions of the Swindon Plan to create a fairer, better and greener borough.

Transformation workstreams – progress update

- 3.5 The Swindon 2028 programme has launched five active workstreams focused on unlocking early improvements and building the capabilities required for sustainable change. Each is supported by business case development and early implementation activity.

Data and digital

- 3.6 The Council are piloting an AI scribing tool (from the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology) to reduce admin burden and give colleagues more time to focus on frontline work.
- 3.7 The use of Magic Notes – an AI tool that records and analyses face-to-face meetings and suggests follow-up actions has been adopted across a number of Council services. Initial benefits include reduced administration for frontline colleagues.
- 3.8 Five business cases are in development to strengthen the Council's digital offer and increase efficiency across the Council.

Commissioning, procurement and contract management

- 3.9 Business cases are being developed for seven savings opportunities in the current financial year, including grant opportunities and cross council commissioning.
- 3.10 Twelve further business cases are in development, including opportunities for extended cross council commissioning.
- 3.11 We have also had positive early feedback from trialling the Contract Management Capability Programme (CMCP) - this is a training and development initiative that improves contract management skills and knowledge. It's a multi-level programme designed to upskill contract managers, build confidence in working with suppliers, and ensure better value for money across public sector contracts.
- 3.12 In the coming weeks we will launch a new Cross-Council Peer Support Group to build capability and share best practice and learning from our transformation successes.

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Housing, care and homelessness

- 3.13 Salzgitter Court is being reused to support those at risk of homelessness, reducing reliance on expensive nightly accommodation. A business case to reduce turnaround times in housing is also being developed.

Estates and Assets

- 3.14 Governance arrangements to support this area of transformation are now in place. The Capital & Assets Board has been established alongside five dedicated sub-groups covering:
- General Fund (GF) Assets
 - Inclusive Growth
 - HRA Capital Programme
 - Operations (including HRA)
 - ICT & Systems
- 3.15 Terms of reference have been agreed, and most groups are now meeting regularly to coordinate priorities and ensure oversight of key strategic asset and investment decisions.
- 3.16 In parallel, work on the Resident Access Strategy is also progressing as part of the Council's wider Workplace Access Strategy. A role profile is being developed for a Strategic Project Manager with transformation experience to lead this workstream. This role will be pivotal in identifying and assessing future accommodation and access options that are aligned with the Council's emerging Future Council Operating Model, supporting more flexible, efficient, and resident-focused ways of working.
- 3.17 The Strategic Asset Management Framework is likely to commence in Winter 2025, once resource is in place to do so.
- 3.18 Recruitment is underway for new key roles to progress strategic asset management, including Portfolio Managers, Property Surveyor and an Energy Officer.

People, culture and leadership ('At Our Best')

- 3.19 The *At Our Best* (AOB) programme will form Swindon Borough Council's updated People Strategy, supporting the delivery of the Council's transformation goals. It aims to create a high-performance, inclusive culture by focusing on four key pillars:
- Resetting standards and expectations** - embedding clear values, behaviours and accountability across the organisation, aligned with our external brand.

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-Setting us up for success - developing skills and leadership at all levels, with clear career pathways and a stronger talent pipeline.

-Consistent policy and performance - streamlining policies and linking individual objectives to organisational goals to drive high performance.

- Wellbeing and inclusion - building a workforce that reflects our communities, prioritises wellbeing and fosters a strong sense of belonging.

3.20 Together, these pillars will ensure colleagues are equipped, supported and motivated to deliver better outcomes for residents.

3.21 The Council will launch a new service this month called PAM Wellbeing, which will replace the current Care First offer. PAM Wellbeing is a dedicated health and wellbeing platform that provides an enhanced range of support for colleagues, including:

-24/7 access to counselling and mental health support

-A digital wellbeing platform with personalised resources, self-help tools, and live webinars

-Specialist advice services including legal, financial, and family support that is mobile-friendly and easier to access, helping colleagues proactively manage their wellbeing, wherever they are.

3.22 This marks a key step in improving the way we support our workforce's physical, emotional and psychological health.

3.23 A new employee benefits platform will also go live this summer, including lifestyle discounts and a cycle-to-work scheme for colleagues.

3.24 This early transformation activity is already generating momentum and value, demonstrating the Council's commitment to act now rather than wait for the finalisation of the operating model.

Our transformation vision

3.25 The Council's transformation is firmly anchored in the Swindon Plan. Its missions - to create a borough that is fairer, better and greener - provide the framework that underpins every aspect of our work.

3.26 Against this backdrop, the vision for Swindon 2028: Our Future Council is clear: "To enable a proactive, preventative, and financially sustainable organisation that can provide the right support to residents at the right time, while fostering economic growth and enhancing the overall prosperity of the community."

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Blueprint for change: The Future Council Operating Model

- 3.27 A new Future Council Operating Model has been developed working with a transformation consultancy and this will form a blueprint for how the whole council will work together to deliver better outcomes.
- 3.28 This model will guide how we work across every service, placing residents at the centre, using data to inform decisions, and enabling colleagues with the right tools and support.
- 3.29 It's tailored to Swindon's needs and will:
- Put residents at the heart of everything we do
 - Focus on preventing problems early, rather than just reacting to them
 - Use data and evidence to guide decisions
 - Ensure services are easy to access and understand
 - Equip colleagues with better tools and support to do their jobs
 - Empower local teams to shape services with their communities
- 3.30 To bring our Future Council vision to life, a high-level design framework has been developed that defines how the Council will operate differently by 2028. This model is grounded in clear design principles and structured around eight core components.
- 3.31 Together, they set out the capabilities, systems and ways of working the Council need to deliver a more proactive, preventative and financially sustainable Council:
- 3.32 Early intervention and prevention - we'll act earlier and smarter, helping residents avoid crisis and improving outcomes. This means using data to anticipate needs, joining up services, and supporting independence.
- 3.33 Neighbourhood Networks - services will be shaped around local communities, bringing together social care, housing, place and partnership working. This local approach helps us understand needs better and support people where they are.
- 3.34 Assets - we'll take a strategic, place-based approach to our buildings, land and facilities so they support neighbourhood working and meet community needs.
- 3.35 Growth - we'll support economic growth that benefits everyone. This means investing in inclusive development, local businesses, and regeneration.
- 3.36 Service delivery - we'll make our core services more efficient, more responsive, and better aligned to what residents need.

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- 3.37 Resident experience - we're redesigning how people access council services starting with a digital-first but always inclusive approach. Residents will be able to get help easily, quickly and on their own terms.
- 3.38 Enabling services - behind the scenes, we're streamlining support services like HR, IT, and finance. These functions will be more responsive, more joined-up, and focused on helping frontline teams deliver great services.
- 3.39 Digital and data - we'll treat data as a strategic asset and use it to improve the way we make decisions. This will help us target resources, reduce duplication and improve outcomes.
- 3.40 Our emerging Case for Change is included as Appendix 1 so that members are sighted on our key drivers for change.

Strategic service improvement plans

- 3.41 Alongside the transformation programme and existing workstreams, work is also progressing against the three major improvement programmes in statutory services, Children's Social Care, SEND services and Housing services.
- 3.42 These strategic service improvement programmes are integrated with the wider transformation to ensure coordination, avoid duplication, and maximise impact. Governance sits with the Strategic Transformation Board to manage dependencies and align resources.

Funding and investment

- 3.43 The December cabinet report "case for change" set out estimated revenue savings of around £15.8 million over four years and capital receipts of up to £55 million. These projections will be tested and refined in the business case coming to Cabinet in October.
- 3.44 In 2023, Cabinet approved a £1.5 million Transformation Fund to support this corporate transformation programme. This has funded programme development, resourcing, and delivery across the early phases. In 2025, Cabinet approved a further £3 million Transformation Fund to support the design and implementation of the Future Council Operating Model.

4. Alternative options

- 4.1 The Council must set balanced budgets and deliver essential services to residents. The Case for Change is proposed as both the means of delivering savings opportunities to address immediate budget pressures and redesign services to better meet the needs of our residents now and in the future.

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- 4.2 The Council could pursue further reductions to service budgets rather than transform however, with savings plans totalling over £200m since 2010, the potential for the delivery of savings in this way is not expected to have sufficient impact.

5. Implications, Equality Impact Assessment and Risk Management

Financial and Procurement Implications

- 5.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report. The financial implications arising from Swindon 2028 will be included as part of the development of the budget and, where necessary, future reports on Swindon 2028.

Legal and Human Rights Implications

- 5.2 No specific legal implications arise from this report or its recommendations. Legal advice should be sought on individual proposals as they are developed.

Climate Change Impact

- 5.3 Officers will work through the requirements of carbon reduction and mitigations as we develop our implementation plan and bring back mitigating proposals for the Cabinet Member to consider as part of any future Business Cases requiring approval.

All Other Implications (including Staff, Sustainability, Health, Rural, Crime and Disorder)

- 5.4 All implications of the implementation plan will be considered as they are developed.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 5.5 All implications of implementation plan will be considered as they are developed, EQIAs will be produced as part of the planning process.

Risk Management

- 5.6 It is imperative that the council has developed plans to deliver savings to balance upcoming budgets and has planned pathway to financial stability. All transformation plans will have identified risks and the means to track and monitor at both a strategic and tactical delivery level. Delivery of the programmes and any related savings tracking is undertaken with a robust programme governance framework. Accountability is held by the sponsors of the workstreams which rests with members of the corporate management team, who form a strategic governance board.

6. Consultees

- 6.1 The Director of Finance and Audit (S151 officer) and Chief Legal Officer (Monitoring Officer) are consulted in respect of all reports.

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7. Background Papers

7.1 None.

8. Appendices

8.1 Appendix 1 – Swindon Borough Council, Target Operating Model – Case for Change.

9. Key Decision / Decision in Cabinet Work Programme and Forward Plan

9.1 This is a not key decision and is included in the Cabinet Work Programme and Forward Plan for July 2025.