

PUBLICA

Delivering great services locally

BUSINESS PLAN 2019 - 20

Visibly Better Services

March 2019

FOREWORD



Our first Business Plan was focused on preparing for the future and now our second needs to build upon the firm foundations put in place in our first year and start to deliver on our ambition to create visibly better services on behalf of our four partner councils.

The advent of the internet and then in more recent years mobile smart technologies has opened up a world of new opportunities in terms of how customers access services and how organisations can deal with those customers.

We are witnessing massive changes to the way we access services and how companies are developing radical new approaches to allow anytime, anywhere access. At the moment this level of customer service is very much the exception across local government and the public sector.

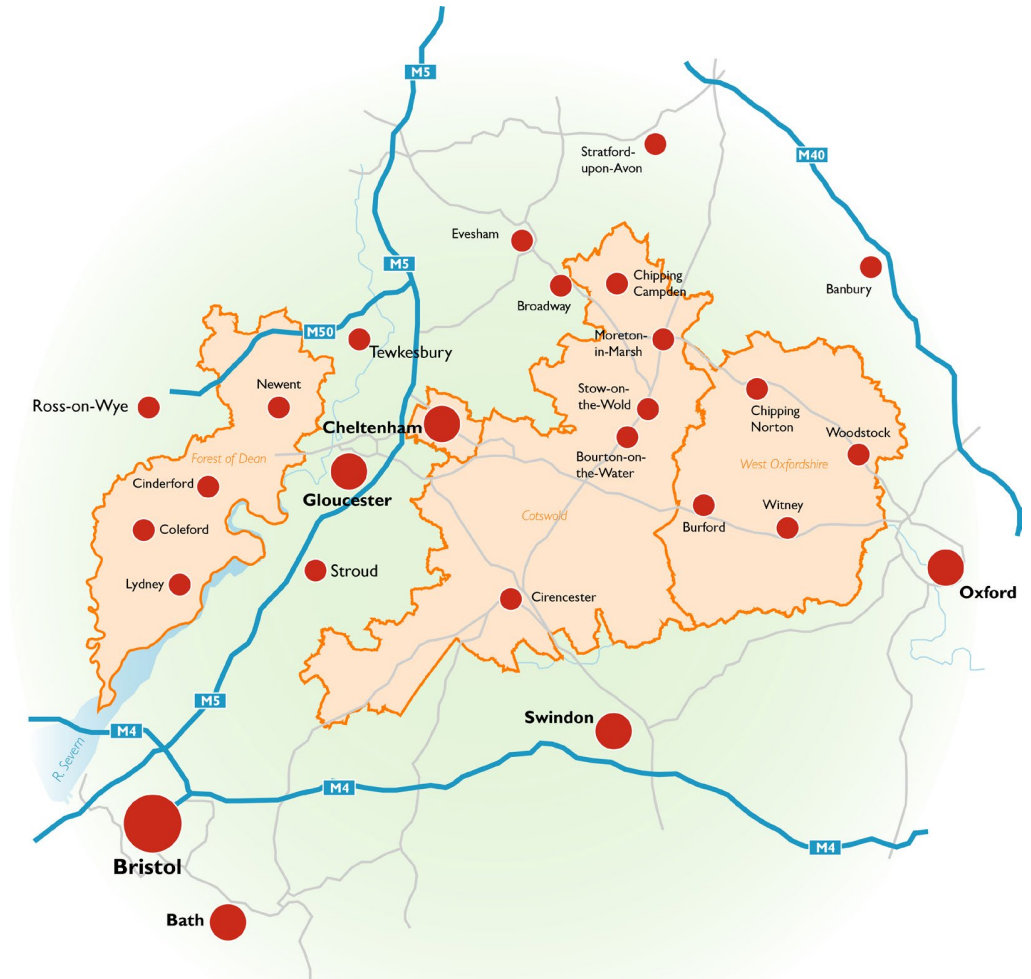
Achieving this level of change and improvement will only be possible as a result of using better technology; developing new systems and processes; and changing the way we are organised.

If Publica is to make a step change improvement over the course of the next 12-18 months we need to give our staff the right tools and opportunities to deliver better services. We have already invested in market leading technology. This year we will review our systems and processes, and develop common digital capabilities, which will improve how customers interact with their Councils.

Our 2019/20 Business Plan sets out the key steps we will take to deliver improved services to customers and residents.

Dave Brooks
Chairman
Publica Group Limited

David Neudegg
Managing Director
Publica Group Limited



WHAT IS PUBLICA?

Publica is a not-for-profit company created by four councils to deliver great services locally and which aims to:

- **Be a great service provider**
- **Be a great place to work**
- **Support our member councils to deliver their ambitions for their place**
- **Be a growing and improving company**

Publica is a council owned employment company which delivers shared services between Cotswold, West Oxfordshire, and Forest of Dean District Councils and Cheltenham Borough Council. Publica additionally provides services to the Cheltenham Trust, Cheltenham Borough Homes and UBICO (an environmental services local authority company).

Each of the councils and clients retain their independence and identity but by working together and sharing resources seek to maximise mutual benefit, leading to more efficient, effective delivery of local services.

Publica was created to assist councils to:

- **Respond to current and future financial pressures**
- **Deliver efficient, value for money services using technology in a connected world**
- **Increase organisational resilience and capacity by sharing expertise**
- **Deliver better outcomes for our communities**
- **Champion local needs**

Together with its partner councils the company seeks to deliver the best solutions for residents and communities using all of the potential options available to us; to design directly provided services to succeed in meeting the agreed standards; and to ensure they are delivered for the best possible value.

Publica recognises that its only assets are its employees and therefore it aims to be a great organisation that people want to work for, providing modern and flexible terms and conditions to meet the demands of a 21st Century workforce

The Company Board consists of four Executive Directors, four Independent Non-Executive Directors, and one councillor Non-Executive Director appointed by Cheltenham Borough Council.

Benefits of a Shared Company Model

The company approach provides a mechanism to bring employees from across the public sector under a single employment arrangement. The company is independent of individual councils but accountable equally to all partners.

This approach allows us to act in a more commercial and creative way to deliver a better approach to public service delivery, focused on delivering benefits for local residents.

Publica is transforming the way local services are delivered. To help do this we have started to fundamentally rethink the way we design our services in the digital era so that Publica is a customer focused organisation driven by real user

needs. The shared approach has allowed us to pool our resources to create a properly funded Digital Transformation Programme across four councils which would have been unaffordable individually.

Publica is not Traditional Local Government

Shared Chief Executives, shared management and shared services have been around since about 2005. There are now around 40 councils that share Chief Executives. The growth in this number has slowed down to a trickle in recent years with many councils that want to share being unable to find a suitable local partner that they can work with. Typically, extensive shared officer structures deliver between 8-12% savings on the total staffing costs to run a district council. By creating a four council partnership we have been able to increase that saving to 22%. By combining the shared services approach with a company model to deliver extensive digital services we have ambitious plans to deliver up to 30% by 2021. We have also demonstrated that sharing does not need to be limited to political or geographical alliances but can provide benefits to any council who is prepared to collaborate and share resources.

No other company model has the breadth and scale of Publica – three of the four councils within the partnership transferred over 99% of their employees into the company in 2017 – effectively providing the entire officer function for those councils – nowhere else is doing this.

Our motives for the establishment of Publica are also different to many others; they are not about income generation or commercial competition but simply about providing better services for less. Our £10m transformation programme could only be funded by sharing the costs between the four councils which no one individual council could afford on their own. This bigger shared investment is enabling us to deliver a much more radical digital transformation programme than would otherwise be the case, enabling us to plan more radical improvements to the user experience than councils acting alone can afford to do.

Applicability to the Local Government Sector

- A “not for profit” option to share services regardless of politics or geography – Research indicates that the proposed fair funding review and business rates reset confirmed as part of this year’s financial settlement will redistribute available funding, leaving many district councils with reductions of over 15%. The ability of many of those councils, particularly those with low levels of reserves to survive such a reduction without drastic reductions in services will be limited. Publica is an established model providing better services for less cost for a council that can be delivered faster and cheaper than councils trying to do it themselves.
- An alternative to County Unitaries to solve the problem of financially struggling Councils in Two Tier areas – The shared company model delivers much of the savings expected from any unitary council proposals without the three years of disruption which inevitably follows such a proposal and no democratic deficit caused by upscaling to geographically large unitary councils.
- Supporting the Digital Transformation Programme for Local Government – One of the unexpected benefits of creating a shared services company has been that we have been able to develop a joint approach to Digital Transformation. We know that Digital Transformation is difficult to do and expensive – so to be able to share costs; a digital platform; and service design skills across four councils means we can do more, quicker, for less cost. We also know that there are scarce ICT skills available to physically implement the changes and that these people can demand much higher salaries. For other national public services (e.g. police and health) separate

companies are being created to deliver changes on behalf of all. A jointly owned company or companies (perhaps linked to digital platform suppliers) could provide a cheaper and faster delivery of digital services for all of local government than the current shared best practice approach being adopted by the government’s Local Digital initiative.

- An alternative to “outsourcing” - The current requirement to pay the LGPS contributions means that if a council wished to bring services back “in-house” it increases the service costs significantly due to the entitlement to join the LGPS for employees. A company model makes this more affordable particularly if the company itself is more efficient in the way it delivers services.
- Model for Broader Collaboration – A shared employment model can be used for any area of collaboration between councils and/or between councils and other public bodies. It creates a vehicle whereby staff from each participating body can feel equal partners without the arguments and perceptions of one employment body being “in control”. This model could be used for collaboration partnerships around public health; housing and growth; digital transformation; or as we have done, shared services.



“Publica is a company created
by four councils to deliver
great services locally”

THE LOCAL AUTHORITY CONTEXT

2020 will see a major a fundamental review of how local government is funded. In recent years there has been a shift away from core grant to councils in favour of incentivised funding focused around housing and economic growth.

For all of our partner councils New Homes Bonus and Business Rates Retention have become very significant core elements supporting Council budgets. Current consultation being undertaken by government indicates that both sources of funding could be dramatically reduced in 2020 leaving a potentially large funding gap for Councils to deal with in the short to medium term. The implications for each Council as set out in their financial strategies indicate additional savings targets for 2020-2023 as follows:

- **Cheltenham Borough Council £2.8m**
- **Cotswold District Council £2m**
- **Forest of Dean District Council £1.25m**
- **West Oxfordshire District Council £1m**

Our Business Plan seeks to support our partner councils to meet the financial challenges both by developing commercial strategies for them and will set out business case proposals to accelerate our proposals to deliver even better services for additional service savings.



Publica - “A great place to work”

MEMBERS' STATED REQUIREMENTS

The Member Councils have set out within the approved Business Case both the financial and non-financial expectations of Publica which are shown below:

Expected Outcomes

Savings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivers realistic and sustainable revenue savings. • Provides a positive return on investment in the medium to long term. • Enables us to make further savings through partnership and better asset management. • Enables opportunities for income generation.
Influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respects our separate identities as individual authorities. • Ensures our decision making will remain locally accountable. • Strengthens our ability to exercise community leadership on behalf of our localities. • Allows us to retain strong local knowledge of our frontline services. • Each authority has impartial commissioning and client side advice from people they trust.
Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhances and maintains good quality services to the public. • Allows us to nurture our partnerships and take advantage of new ones. • Creates organisations that are flexible and adaptable to future changes. • Has governance and structures that are streamlined and easy to understand. • Is widely acknowledged to be socially responsible.
Creativity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empowers employees to be creative, collaborative and enquiring. • Supports our commitment to a public service that responds to and empowers our local communities. • Fosters and rewards and innovative, can-do approach to delivering services.

Financial requirements

The business case that supported the formation of Publica identified savings of £1.7m to be delivered over the first three full years of the contract, followed by further iterative savings amounting to £0.5m. This amounts to around 10% of the core contract values.

We will have delivered £0.48m in line with the business case financial target for 2018/19 and have put in place changes to deliver £0.93m for 2019/20. In addition to these business case savings we will have delivered estimated additional financial savings back to the partner councils of £1.25m at the end of this financial year.

As set out earlier, the ambition of the company is to deliver additional financial benefits over and above the initial business case targets to support councils meet the emerging financial challenges.

To deliver additional efficiencies we will need to:

- Reduce the need for customers to contact the councils in person or by phone, through encouraging more self service
- Ensure that where customers do need to contact the council, we deal with them at the most appropriate level
- Support our specialists so that the majority of their time is focused on utilising their knowledge and experience
- Commence a phased programme of fundamentally re-imagining some services to radically reduce demand and/or automate routine processes.

We are currently reviewing what further improvements can be made and will present our findings together with a new Business Case to Councils during 2019.



“We provide excellent service to our local communities, the councils and clients we support and our colleagues”

THE PUBLICA WAY - VALUES

AUTHENTIC

- We act genuinely and transparently. We do the right thing for our customers, our organisation and each other.
- We don't just go through the motions. We take time to engage with, listen to and really understand our customers' needs.
- We're honest and decent. We admit it when we make a mistake, we put it right and we learn from it.
- We respect and support our colleagues. We look out for each other and are always ready to step in and help.

MODERN

- We are not set in our ways. We are constantly looking to find ways to innovate and do things smarter.
- We are curious and ask questions. We create an environment where feedback and challenge is welcome.
- We innovate, embrace new technology and find ways to improve and work better.
- We work collaboratively, actively sharing our learning and experiences with each other and recognise each other's success and achievements.

FLEXIBLE

- We are agile - adapting how and what we do to meet the demands of our customers, our colleagues, our local communities and the needs of the modern world.
- We are practical; use our common sense, insight and judgement. We are willing to adapt and make changes as the need arises.
- We go out of our way to deliver for our colleagues and for our customers, even if that means changing our plans.
- We are always willing to learn new methods, tools and techniques to improve the service we deliver and meet the future needs of our customers.

THOUGHTFUL

- We take pride in delivering a great service, taking the time to understand and care about our customers and their needs.
- We work to high standards, aiming to add value at every opportunity and deliver our best.
- We are warm and approachable, acting professionally but still being friendly and kind.
- We respect our colleagues and customers.

“No improvements can be made unless our councils and residents have confidence that the things that matter to them are done well”



SUCCESS FACTORS
BENEFITS
COMMERCE
DIGITAL TRANS
COMMERCIAL REAL
EXP
TRANS
CLIENTS
METRICS
NO
RICAL

renew my licence
pay my council tax bill
return my benefits overpayment
continue my planning application
change the name on my licence

GREAT
TO
WORK

REVIEW OF THE 2018/19 BUSINESS PLAN

The first 17 months of the company from its go live date in November 2017 have been focused on moving from a situation of employees operating within three different council environments into creating one team, whilst at the same time continuing to deliver the day job really well.

There was a massive programme to migrate all of the staff to the company on day one, both in terms of the TUPE transfer but also to make sure that all of the associated systems and processes were in place to avoid any disruption.

Our early focus after the transfer was to signal a change for all of the staff with new branding, new name badges and visible material around the offices. We also launched our company values and linked these to a recognition scheme whereby staff nominated colleagues for demonstrating one of the four Publica Values.

We also know that the move from three councils into one organisation has highlighted differences in terms and conditions and the way people are remunerated for similar jobs. We have consulted with staff and trade unions on a framework for how we will, over time, correct those differences. We won't be able to do it straight away but the sooner we start, the quicker we will be able to achieve greater fairness and equality amongst all of our staff.

We have agreed a number of principles that will guide our thinking:

- **It is not our intention to make people worse off as a result of the move to a new, more flexible, pay structure.**
- **We will not deliver savings through a reduction in the benefits to existing staff.**
- **Those who want to work for Publica and live the values will be retained.**
- **Savings will be managed through natural turnover of staff.**
- **There will be opportunities to take on new roles and learn new skills.**
- **Re-training will be provided to adapt to new systems and processes.**
- **We will engage with our staff (and councillors) as we go through the process together.**
- **Support will be available for individuals who wish to exit the organisation.**

We know that we will not be able to become visibly better without changing what we do and providing our staff with the right resources to deliver improvement. A key component of this is to have modern and flexible IT systems in place to support changes.

Following a detailed independent report we procured a “digital platform” called Salesforce which not only provides us with massively enhanced “ready for use” capability but is expandable to enable us to take on more clients in the future should this be decided upon. Our first priority has been to simply transfer existing services which are dealt with by customer service teams onto this digital platform. This will be complete by 1 April 2019, allowing us to turn off the existing CRM systems.

So have we managed to do these things and continue to maintain service standards? Yes. Publica continues to provide quarterly performance reports to each of the councils setting out how we are performing against key performance metrics. Our Quarter 3 Performance Report identifies that over 90% of key indicators; over 80% of all indicators; and 95% of key tasks are on or exceeding target. These levels of performance are broadly similar or in some cases slightly better than before Publica was established.

That is not to say that everything is perfect, we know that things go wrong and factors often outside of our control can adversely impact on service standards. We have however been able to keep our promise that when things go wrong, we will admit to our mistakes and put things right as quickly as possible.

BUSINESS PLAN VISION

By 2020... for our residents, councillors, staff, clients and other councils to notice a visible improvements to how services are delivered

By 2021... for Publica to be providing services to other councils

By 2025... for Publica to start providing services to other public organisations

Publica recognises that no improvements can be made unless our councils and residents have confidence that the things that matter to them are done well.

Our first priority will always be:
To do the 'day job' really well

Doing the 'day job' does not mean that we shouldn't strive to improve the way services are delivered, to make it easier to contact us and require less effort on the part of residents to get things done. We know that much of residents' contact with councils is around things that need to be done and we want to make this as painless as possible for residents. We want to make sure that people are clear about what we can and what we can't do, to make sure that we meet customer needs.

Our second priority is to:

Transform service delivery and exceed service expectations

We understand that we have been established by our member councils to deliver even greater efficiencies which in turn protect critical local services to communities. However, we do not just want to do the bare minimum but rather have ambitious long terms plans to transform the way public services are delivered in a connected world.

Our third priority is to:

Develop Publica people

We know that the only way to deliver great services locally is to employ people who want to live the Publica values and use their skills for the benefits of our member councils, our clients and our customers.

Our fourth objective is to:

Exceed the minimum business case financial targets

We already have plans in place to exceed the minimum business case targets for 2019/20, but recognise that we need to start developing more ambitious plans to ensure that not only does each council receive the minimum amount but that we also provide support for councils to meet future challenges.

This year we want to introduce a new priority:

To start taking our first tentative steps towards developing a commercial offer to other Councils

We are aware that the model created by our four partner councils has a number of applications that could be used by the local government sector and is starting to attract considerable interest from other councils. We have been shortlisted by two national bodies for the best alternative service delivery model and asked to speak at national seminars and conferences.

The upcoming 2020/21 local government finance settlement is a potentially significant moment when a number of councils could be facing urgent and sizeable financial challenges. Many of those councils are geographically located in the south/central area of the country. Publica will need to have a commercial offer available by the end of 2019 if it wishes to take advantage of the potential opportunity.

GREAT SERVICES

Publica wants to transform the way local services are delivered. To help do this a cross section of staff made up of people with lots of different skills and from very different service backgrounds, has started working together to develop the way we design our services so that Publica is a customer focused organisation driven by real user needs.

Over the business plan period customers and users can expect:

- Services delivered to a high standard that are responsive, flexible and focused on individual and community needs
- Staff who are warm and approachable, who take the time to listen and understand their needs
- A seamless approach to handling complex service requests that cut across more than one service
- Openness and honesty about what we can and cannot provide/deliver
- A willingness to hear and consider ideas about how we can improve our services

The order in which service design reviews will take place hasn't been decided yet. What we do know though is every service will benefit from some improvements by April 2019 and staff and users of the services will be involved.

We're doing this in a way that will build on the great work happening already and help us to:

- show we're **AUTHENTIC** and **THOUGHTFUL** by taking the time to engage with, listen to and really understand our customers' needs
- be **FLEXIBLE** adapting how and what we do to meet the rapidly changing demands of our users - customers, colleagues and local communities and the needs of the modern world
- understand the end to end customer journey, who's involved and the things that make it work
- develop meaningful performance measures so we know how well we're meeting user needs and to help us do things even better
- be an agile, **MODERN** company and encourage a creative and enterprising culture where our staff own and drive this change
- develop a new organisational design, based on a network of empowered people and not a structural hierarchy
- use real time and relevant data to make our decisions - not use long held untested beliefs
- understand baseline demand, resources and costs so we can track changes and benefits over time - social, economic, environmental or reputational
- make sure our users (and partner councils) are not disrupted by our service and organisational transformation

We'll know if Great Services is being successful by measuring:

- Satisfaction for customers across all contact channels
- Cost effectiveness - the minimum business case financial targets are exceeded
- Efficiency - reduced costs and/or reduced demand of dealing with customer enquiries

Great Services is just one part of our transformation programme, so our work will help to:

- develop new thinking and encourage our staff to be ready to experiment
- reinforce and support the Publica Way of **AUTHENTIC – FLEXIBLE – MODERN – THOUGHTFUL**
- have visible and accessible leaders across Publica
- develop Publica so it can work effectively in a digital age
- build greater resilience across the partner councils
- enable future growth of Publica Group with minimal change

KEY TASKS

1. Migrate our existing customer services onto the new “Salesforce” platform – Quarter 1
2. Develop further our core digital capabilities to enhance both our personalised contact and our self-serve options with residents and customers (ongoing)
3. Complete an initial review of services including an assessment of user needs, data collection and evidence, staffing capabilities and resources required to deliver the service and digital opportunities for improvement – Quarter 2
4. Present a new Business Case to our Partner Councils setting out the potential further benefits to be realised through Digital Transformation and investment costs required to deliver the benefits (Quarter 2)
5. Publish a revised “service catalogue” – Quarter 2

GREAT PEOPLE

The creation of Publica brings together employees servicing four councils and three major client organisations. The key challenge within the Business Plan period is to continue to create one organisation with consistency and fairness for all staff.

Over the business plan period our people can expect:

- Excellent opportunities for personal, professional and career development
- Recognition and reward for the contributions they make
- Support, trust and respect
- Flexibility and choice
- To have jobs that are challenging, rewarding but manageable
- To have a safe and healthy working environment
- To be well informed not only about the organisation they work for but also about the people and communities they serve

We are doing this in a way that will build on the great work happening already and provide a commitment to our employees based upon the following reward principles, regardless of whether that is basic pay, recognition or benefits:

- **Aligned** to our organisation - closely aligned to the Publica business strategy and goals, reflective of 'The Publica Way', and our communities.

- **Trusted** - people trust our approach to reward that they feel is fair and consistently applied.
- **Based on contribution** - we recognise and celebrate contribution and those that go above and beyond.
- **Modern and simple** - we ensure that it's relevant to the wants and needs of employees today, including choice and flexibility to meet the needs of a diverse workforce with different requirements.
- **Attractive** - we need to be competitive and aware of how we compare with the wider market.
- **Transparent** - we want to be open, transparent and clear about how we reward so that employees understand the deal – what is expected and what they can expect in return.

How will we know when we have been successful in having great people?

- By regularly monitoring how motivated and appreciated employees feel
- How they rate ease and effort of getting their tasks completed
- By comparing ourselves to others in measuring overall employee engagement, satisfaction and health and wellbeing
- Seeing a reduction in short term sickness absence and employee conflicts
- Measuring increased employee productivity

KEY TASKS

1. Publish results and actions of the biennial staff survey – Quarter 1
2. Approve Publica People Strategy – Quarter 2
3. Complete the roll out of Change Management Support programme – Quarter 2
4. Introduce Intern and Graduate Trainee programme funded from salaries underspend (subject to Council approvals) – Quarter 2
5. Introduce apprenticeship and Stepping up to Lead programmes across Publica – Quarter 2
6. Make improvements to flexible benefits package – Quarter 1
7. Migrate staff to new pay and grading structure - Quarter 2

SUPPORTING COUNCILS & CLIENTS

The service delivery model created by Publica is unique in that it not only brings together service providers but also delivers expert advice and commissioning support. This ensures that together we maximise the benefits of our scarce resources and ensure that policy development, procurement and service delivery are all aligned.

Over the business plan period our councils and clients can expect:

- Consistent high quality services
- Continuously improving services
- From 2020 onwards potential new income streams for the benefit of Company Members
- On-going financial benefits for Company Members
- Provision of better data and insight to improve decision and policy making
- Top quality expert advice and support

We're doing this in a way that will build on the successful partnership working that has happened previously. We want councillors and clients to visibly notice a difference over the next 18 months with better ways of accessing staff, quicker responses to queries and more positive feedback from users of our services

How will we know when we have been successful in supporting our councils and clients?

- By regularly monitoring how satisfied Councillors and Clients are in the support they receive
- By measuring how Councillors evaluate the support they are given in undertaking their various roles
- By providing robust data and performance metrics to track improvement
- By exceeding the financial and non- financial outcomes

KEY TASKS

1. New Member Induction Programme – Quarter 1
2. Approve Commissioning Strategy and supporting policy and procedures' (FoDDC, CDC and WODC only) – Quarter 2
3. Work with FoDDC, WODC and CDC on the development of new four-year Corporate Plans – Quarter 2
4. Implement the action plans arising out of the LGA Peer Challenges – Quarter 1
5. Undertake a fundamental review of service delivery contracts and costs for support services to our clients
6. Implement the key tasks in Councils' and Clients' Corporate Plans - Ongoing
7. Develop Council Commercial Strategies (FoDDC, CDC and WODC) – Quarter 3
8. Roll out compliant, resilient, email solution to Councillors (FoDDC, CDC and WODC) – Quarter 1
9. Deliver against business case savings targets – End of Year

IMPROVING & GROWING COMPANY

In a fast changing world Publica needs to be a learning and improving organisation. We don't want to just see small incremental improvements built upon traditional service delivery principles but rather seek out and try new approaches which set us apart from other public sector providers. Already set out elsewhere in our Business Plan we outline our proposals for radical change and collectively these form our transformation programme.

If we achieve our Business Plan Objectives of being visibly better, we believe that Publica can offer a compelling and attractive proposition to others. Our marketing approach is to be a better and always improving organisation. We will do this by reinvesting some of the additional savings generated from the over-delivery of our financial targets.

What our existing and new councils and clients can expect from us:

- Confidence and evidence that Publica is great for service provision and a great employer
- Make significant savings and deliver better services with affordable investment costs
- Benefit from a culture of continuous learning that keeps on delivering improved services

New business opportunities will be created by focusing on delivering great services locally and making sure that potential new member councils and clients are aware of what we are doing. We would like to be in a position in 2019 to be able to set out a clear and compelling commercial offer to the sector.

With regard to attracting potential new partners, our focus will be on raising awareness and understanding of our approach directly with senior councillors and their officers.

We will know when we are successful when:

- We get interest from other public bodies in what we are doing
- We convert interest into commitment; and
- We successfully transition our first major new client/member to Publica

KEY TASKS

1. Approve a commercial offer to other Councils – Quarter 2
2. Seek national recognition through appropriate national awards - Ongoing
3. Promote the Publica Model at the LGA National Conference – Quarter 2
4. Approve a Digital Transformation Plan (subject to Business Case approval) – Quarter 3
5. Complete 2/3 Fundamental Digital Transformation Reviews (subject to Business Case approval)– Quarter 4
6. Approve a prioritised service improvement plan (subject to Business Case approval) – Quarter 2



