



Council name	COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL
Name and date of Committee	CABINET - 7 MARCH 2024
Subject	PUBLICA REVIEW- LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS TRANSITION PLAN
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Councillor Joe Harris, Leader of the Council Email: joe.harris@cotswold.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Robert Weaver, Chief Executive Email: robert.weaver@cotswold.gov.uk
Report author	Robert Weaver, Chief Executive Email: robert.weaver@cotswold.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	To consider the Local Partnerships report and to approve the recommendations therein.
Annexes	Annex A – Local Partnerships Report
Recommendation(s)	That Cabinet resolves to recommend to Full Council to: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Approve the recommendations set out in the Local Partnerships report2. Instruct the Interim Programme Director to prepare a detailed transition plan, building on the recommendations set out in the Local Partnerships report, for subsequent agreement by Cabinet and Council.
Corporate priorities	Ensure that all services delivered by the Council are delivered to the highest standard.
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive & Section 151 Officer, Director of Governance and Development (Monitoring Officer) CDC Leader, Deputy Leader, Portfolio Holder for economic Development and Cabinet Transformation, CDC Cabinet Members, Publica Review Programme



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	Director, Publica Interim MD, Publica Assistant Director Organisational Development and Transformation.
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- 1.1 A Local Government Association Peer Review in 2022 highlighted the need to ensure the council was best placed to maximise opportunities associated with an ambitious Administration and Corporate Plan. It recommended that an options appraisal be undertaken, considering the appropriateness of some services remaining within Publica.
- 1.2 An options appraisal review was undertaken by a company called Human Engine in 2023. The final report recommended that a significant number of services should move from Publica and return to being under greater control of the councils. This would leave Publica delivering a range of support and customer services for the Councils.
- 1.3 The Human Engine report and its recommendations were approved by Full Council in November 2023 and work then started to recruit a programme director who would support the Chief Executives and elected members in implementing the transition.
- 1.4 A programme director has now been appointed, following a two-stage interview process involving both officers and Leaders and is working on behalf of the 3 Councils, under the leadership of the Chief Executives, to develop and implement the transition.
- 1.5 It was clear that following approval of the Human Engine report, and whilst the recruitment of a programme director was taking place, it was important to maintain momentum. Local Partnerships was therefore asked to support the councils, as part of its South West transformation grant funding programme, in the development of a 'bridging report' that built on the work undertaken by Human Engine and to inform the preparation and implementation of detailed transition plan that will be presented by the Programme Director and Chief Executive later in the year.
- 1.6 The Local Government Association runs a Transformation Fund programme through its partner organisation Local Partnerships. Local Partnerships LLP is a consultancy firm jointly owned by the LGA, Treasury and Welsh Government, delivering value for the public purse. Local Partnerships come with a wealth of experience and are well placed to be able to refer to the wider public sector's experience of insourcing to provide illustrations of governance, organisational design and service transformation, having been involved in undertaking service reviews for a number of Councils in the past. This knowledge and approach facilitates bringing services back in-house following best practice, rather than simply 'lift and shift'.
- 1.7 The brief agreed with Local Partnerships was for the provision of a high-level set of recommendations, following those set out in the Human Engine report, to enable the



councils to take the project forward. The Councils were granted the equivalent of 20 consultancy days to provide high-level advice based on their experience of supporting councils with transition plans and from evidence gathered from other insourcing projects across the sector. Therefore timescales set out are indicative but realistic based on previous experience. Furthermore the Local Partnerships report did not intend to seek to identify all service areas to be transferred, but to give a high level overview of and suggest key phases of services as part of the transition. It will be for the Interim Programme Director to develop this further with more specific detail in due course. It is envisaged that the detailed transition plan will be completed by the end of April, with subsequent reporting back through the Council's scrutiny and decision-making meetings.

- 1.8** The Local Partnerships commission was undertaken in a similar way to a Peer Review. The Local Partnerships team carried out interviews with the four CEOs, Interim MD of Publica and the Programme Director to understand the current position from their perspective and their views and ambitions for the insourcing project.
- 1.9** In addition a half-day workshop took place with key staff from both the councils and Publica, to understand more about the views of the wider stakeholder group regarding the transition. This information was then used to develop an outline framework for the transition of services to enable the programme team to take this forward. Their report covers key governance, risk and structural principles to support the transition from Publica back to the councils.

1.10 NEXT STEPS

1.11 Governance

- 1.12** It is important that there are arrangements in place to ensure Councillors are provided with regular updates and the opportunity to be part of the review process. In addition to input and oversight from the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, and of course the key decision making meetings, following the Full Council meeting in November, it was agreed that a small cross party member working group be created. This group would receive updates on the Publica Review work. The Chief Executive will draft a terms of reference and liaise with Group Leaders regarding membership.
- 1.13** In addition, it is proposed that a facilitated session, open to all members takes place to provide an opportunity to brief all members on the review progress, and to gain member's views on what 'success' will look and feel like (from their perspective) as services are



returned to the councils. It is likely that this session would be facilitated by colleagues from the Local Government Association, supported by the Programme Director and Chief Executive.

2. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 2.1** There are no financial implications associated with this report. The Local Partnerships work was grant funded by the Local Government Association at no cost to the Councils. The As set out in earlier reports, the financial impact of the proposals will be developed as part of the due diligence process over the coming weeks and included in the detailed Transition Plan.
- 2.2** Although there will be further reports to Cabinet and Council throughout the transition period, it is recommended that the quarterly financial performance reports to Cabinet include timely and relevant financial updates.

3. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1** There are no legal implications associated with this report. As per financial implications, the legal implications associated with the Publica Review have been previously reported and will remain a key part of the due diligence process.

4. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 4.1** The commissioning of Local Partnerships and their subsequent report provides additional independent advice and recommendations associated with the return of services to the Council. The recommendations are based on assessment of the original Human Engine report, conversations with key officers and their experience based on best practice elsewhere. As such their report is beneficial in terms of providing additional assurances to the Council on the key elements of the review, phasing and the direction of travel. This approach of risk management will continue as the service review develops. In addition, clarity around the transition plan will also help to minimise risks associated with staff feeling unsettled and unsure of their future, which in turn should minimise risks around day-to-day service delivery.

5. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 5.1** Under equality legislation, the Council has a legal duty to pay 'due regard' to the need to eliminate discrimination and promote equality in relation to:



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- Race
- Disability
- Gender, including gender reassignment
- Age
- Sexual Orientation
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Religion or belief

When considering this recommendation, no barriers or impact on any of the above groups has been identified.

6. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

6.1 This recommendation has no climate change implications.

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Annex A Local Partnerships report and recommendations.

(END)