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improvement **service**

CASE STUDY

Angus Council Change Programme

Over the last eight years, Angus Council has been working with a range of external and internal stakeholders to implement an innovative change programme, improving the delivery of services to the public and saving money at a time when local government finances have been under severe pressure. The council has already saved around £39 million through their change programme since 2018, with with further significant savings forecast through new initiatives over the next five years.

The work started in 2014, when Angus Council began a partnership with Ernest and Young (EY), the multinational professional services network, to drive change and transformation within the local authority.

The project, Transforming Angus, began with the goal of delivering specialist services, increasing capacity and capability to ensure essential services

CASE STUDY

were protected during a period of financial pressure, and was subsequently expanded further after a [Best Value Audit Review](#) by the Accounts Commission in 2016 found that the council needed to 'raise (their) level of ambition and increase the pace and depth of improvement'.

Taking this feedback into account Angus Council worked in partnership with EY, to identify, inform and develop new proposals to support future needs.

This initial transformation work included:

- advice to support the establishment of the Angus Alive culture and leisure trust

- improving the quality, capacity and sustainability of care services through the Help to Live at Home programme

- analysis and engagement to support identification of commercial opportunities

- proposal for a new customer contact model to enhance customer experience and reduce cost through digitisation

Alongside this, the council initiated a wide-ranging agile working and estates review programme which introduced new ways of working and started to reduce the existing buildings portfolio.

Phase Two

In June 2017, Angus Council and EY agreed not to progress the partnership into phase two, with the local authority instead focussing their change and transformation work using in-house resources. A new team was formed to lead, develop and deliver the next phases of the new change programme, which took a new approach focused on the priorities around economy, people and place, aligned with the council's strategic plan.

This more holistic approach to organisational development focused on results and how the council would directly shape their future organisational change activity, while embedding change into their organisational culture. This approach built on the existing achievements and learning from the strategic partnership to ensure the council was better placed to deliver value for the citizens of Angus and sustain the demands for ongoing change.

One of the key areas of work in the early part of this new change programme was the introduction of process automation technology to assist in their commitment to be a 'digital council by 2020'. Opportunities were identified to use this technology to streamline and simplify internal processes, leading to an improved service for customers who would now be able to access services at a time when it is most convenient for them. The initial proof of concept was developed in the Revenues and Benefits service, with the introduction of digital forms as well as other automated processes.

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improved the delivery of public services but also saved around £39 million, including significant savings by partners. A number of individual transformation projects delivered these savings, including:

- Managers review during 2017/18 – significant organisational change to senior management structures with a saving of £1.5m

- Organisational Development and Zero-Base Budget (ODZBB) in 2018/19 and 2019/20 with savings of £3.1m

- Review of teacher workforce numbers over a 3-year period yielded savings of £1.851m

- Ongoing agile/estates review programme that since 2018 has saved £1.48m

- Business support review over 3-year period saving £790k

- Review of staff slippage and establishment work saved £900k

- The comprehensive school office review in 2018/19 saved £309k

Change Strategy

In 2020, Angus Council published their Finance and Change Plan, which included a specific change strategy, reflecting the efforts that Angus Council has been making to progress cultural development in this area throughout the organisation. The combination of these documents demonstrates the commitment to achieving change across the organisation and ensures that there is a 'golden thread' throughout the whole strategic direction of Angus Council. The document was updated in 2021 and again in subsequent years to ensure it continued to be fit for purpose.

For Angus Council, and for the wider public sector, transformative change is vital when faced with the kinds of challenges that are outlined in the change strategy. This may involve difficult decisions, including the reduction of lower priority services in order to ensure that essential services are maintained. Indeed, in recent years, providing focus on the key priorities of elected members was critical to identifying other areas that could be reprioritised.

Through their work on the change strategy and change programme, Angus Council identified the four main categories of change as follows:

- Organisation design/service changes

- Increased cost recovery

- Preventative activity delivered through a targeted partnership approach

- Customer service changes

In order to enable transformational change within key programmes and projects, there are also areas of ongoing corporate improvement work within

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Angus Council which will have an impact on the success of the change programme. These include:

- Digital strategy: in progress

- Customer strategy: in development

- Applications strategy: in development

- Big data strategy: in development

- Performance-led (PLED) programme: in progress

Over the summer and autumn 2022, work was progressed to develop the next iteration of the change projects. This has identified a list of potential projects for adding into the wider change programme.

For each proposed project agreed to move to the next stage, a thorough assessment of the risk, benefits, complexity, level of staffing and financial resources has been carried out. This will assist in the start-up and development phase of the council's project life cycle, building appropriate business cases and using options appraisals to support the implementation of the associated cases for change and most importantly provide evidence-based decision making.

The next phase of the change programme will be essential for the council to address the significant financial challenges that lie ahead. Further work is underway to develop business insights which will focus on developing and improving the quality of business intelligence across the council. This is designed to provide a level of detail and understanding that will support the ability to identify a menu of scenarios, options and opportunities to develop future 'cases for change'. Governance arrangements will continue to be reviewed to ensure that they support the efficient and effective delivery of the change programme.

Going forward, the priorities of economy, people, place and business will remain the key driver in Angus Council's planning, performance, resources and change activities as they look to build on their already successful change programme and continually ensure that it is responding to the needs of the organisation and fit for purpose.

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