

**Customer and Corporate Services Scrutiny  
Management Committee**

**14 October 2019**

Report of the Corporate Project Assurance lead

**Update on the Corporate Project Management approach**

**Summary**

1. The purpose of this report is to update the Customer and Corporate Services Scrutiny Management Committee on the approach to Project Management across City of York Council and present an update on the Council's Major Project portfolio (**Annex A**).

**Background**

2. The council undertakes a large amount of programme and project management and there is a necessity to ensure that there is an ongoing drive to maintain the standards that have previously been set and to strengthen areas where required.
3. The successful delivery of projects is key to the delivery of change across the Council and across the City in terms of providing, for example, customer centric and innovative business models and processes, value for money functions and regeneration. The Council runs a successful multimillion pound Capital programme.

**Projects**

4. In order to ensure that projects are managed and delivered with the appropriate level of assurance, in December 2015 the council introduced the All About Projects (AAP) framework. The AAP framework has been developed based on industry standard best practice as a robust but flexible model for project management at CYC. Over the last 4 years the framework has been implemented and adjusted to ensure the delivery of projects is maximised and risk is minimised. **Annex B** illustrates the phases and flow of the All About Projects framework.

5. Within the framework a project is defined as a ‘temporary group activity designed to deliver one or more product, service or result according to a specified business case.’ In other words:
  - A project is temporary – it has a clear start and end date, and therefore defined scope and resources
  - It has specified deliverables (services or products) that can be measured
  - It has a number of tasks to deliver those services or products
  - A project is unique - it is not a routine operation (business as usual), but a specific set of operations designed to accomplish one or more goals
  - A project team often includes people who don’t usually work together – sometimes from different organisations but always with clear roles and responsibilities.
  
6. The following are areas that have been further developed to strengthen our project management approach in the last 4 years:
  - The Discovery phase is an important pre-project phase where the problem is shaped, knowledge is gathered in order to examine what the council do and what others do (including best practice), ideas are scrutinised and prototyped and proposals are brought forward in order to seek a mandate to move to developing a business case. A key point is that there is no live project at this stage. It is important to embed the thinking and practices around this phase into the everyday business of services areas. This will create a culture that is more responsive to change. There is now more detailed guidance on the Discovery phase.
  - Business case development forms the backbone of the framework and its evolution and the accompanying options presentation and appraisal are important to an efficient journey through the framework. Key is ensuring that the business case has a sound foundation and that its development from Strategic case, through Outline case to Full case is clear. This is based on the Treasury Green Book approach.
  - Gateway points have been built into the framework to ensure that necessary approval, resource and documentation is in place and the risks are understood in order to move to the next phase of the AAP process.
  - The framework is designed to allow an iterative approach to the design and implementation of the products in the projects.

- The framework is flexible in order to cater for different sized projects and during the pre-project phase a project assessment matrix is used to judge the scale of a project. If a project comes out as Major or large it is included in the corporate highlight report. The project is tested against:
  - Council Priorities;
  - Reputation;
  - Structure in terms of process and staff;
  - Technology;
  - Policy or legislation;
  - Stakeholders;
  - Cost;
  - Financial objectives / savings;
  - Contract complexity;
  - Timescale;
- Alignment of the Better Decision making tool to the AAP framework.
- Roll out of the Verto Project Management system.

7. In the last 4 years there had also been developed the Corporate Highlight report. This is a monthly update on the council's major projects that is published on the York Open data platform. There are now 19 projects on Major projects list (see **Annex A**).

## **Project Assurance**

8. Project assurance is there to measure the likelihood of success and to put in place recommendations for improvement.
9. The Programme Assurance group is made up of Directorate representatives who have oversight of all the Projects in their Directorate and collectively this provides oversight of all Projects across the Council.
10. Each Directorate programme lead is responsible for the project register in their Directorate and as a group undertake the following activities:

- Ensure that assurance arrangements are in place for projects in their Directorate;
  - Support Project assurance on projects within their Directorate bringing forward recommended interventions to the Project Sponsors where required;
  - Lead the assurance of the Directorate programme;
  - Make recommendations on interventions to their Directorate Management Team (DMT) on programme assurance;
  - With the rest of the Programme assurance group, make recommendations on interventions or improvements to CMT;
  - Ensure that large and medium sized projects are working to the AAP framework (implicit in this is sound business case, planning, risk and resource management);
  - Keep a register of large and medium sized projects organised into programmes;
  - Keep sight of the resource picture and ensure that commitments aren't duplicated;
  - Ensure that the necessary governance is in place and documents relating to the governance (e.g. Terms of reference) are up to date;
11. The Corporate Project Assurance lead, who chairs the group, reports to CMT on a two monthly basis. The Corporate Project Assurance lead is supported in the project assurance function by the Corporate Project Assurance Officer.

## **Project Training**

12. Having the right skills on a Project team is important and all staff involved in Projects complete the "Introduction to Project Management" training. It is then mandated that all Project Managers of Major or significant Projects complete the Prince2 practitioner course. Finally, Officers who are performing a strategic role on Projects are directed to Managing Successful Programmes (MSP). At present all the Major Project Managers are Prince2 qualified or equivalent.

## **Project Support**

13. All Project based staff in the Council are invited to attend the monthly Project Support group. The purpose of this group is to promote awareness

of the Council's project portfolio (there is a different presentation every month), to join up project based staff to learn lessons and share best practice and to offer support to Project where needed.

## Service Planning

14. The Project Management process is linked to the Service Planning process to ensure that there is a full picture of service ambition and activity.

## Recommendations

15. Customer and Corporate Services Scrutiny Management Committee are asked to note the updates on the project approach and consider the project information provided, and take the opportunity to consider the monthly information published on the open data platform.

Reason: To ensure that the committee is kept updated on key and project activity.

## Contact Details

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<b>For further information please contact the authors of the report</b>			

## Abbreviations

AAP – All About Projects (this is the council's project management framework)  
 CMT – Council Management Team  
 CYC – City of York Council  
 MSP – Managing Successful programmes  
 DMT – Directorate Management Team

Prince2 – Prince2 is a project management methodology that is widely adopted for managing projects in the public sector.

Verto – Verto is the council's project management ICT system

## **Annexes**

**Annex A** – Update of Major projects

**Annex B** – Project workflow