



LGA Session

LGR: The Buckinghamshire Experience

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Today's presentation...

- LGR Implementation Objectives
 - Implementation Activity & PMO
 - Learning/Reflections
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Buckinghamshire Unitary Overview

- Consolidation of 5 organisations (County Council + 4 District Councils)
- 528,000 population & approx 4,000 staff (2020)
- Competing County Councils single County bid vs Districts two unitary Council bid.
- 'Minded to' Decision for single unitary May 2018
- The Unitary Council went live on 1 April 2020
- Council elections delayed due to Covid-19 from May 2020 to May 2021

Date	Key Milestone
September 2016	Submission of Proposal for single Unitary Council
12 March 2018	Secretary of State Minded to Decision - Period for comment
25 May 2018	Close of period for stakeholder responses - Period of reflection by Government
1 November 2018	Final decision by Secretary of State
23 May 2019	Structural change order laid
3 June 2019	Shadow Authority meeting
3 June 2019	Implementation Executive formally established with legal powers to lead the transition
July 2019	Recruitment of Chief Executive
Oct – Dec 2019	Recruitment of Senior Management Team
1 April 2020	Vesting Day
7 May 2020	Date elections for new Council should have been held
6 May 2021	Date elections for new Council were held

LGR Implementation: Our Objectives

The following critical success factors were identified for the transition period (Summer 2019-April 2020):

1. **SAFE AND LEGAL** - overarching requirement for 1st April 2020
 2. **NEW COUNCIL** - Must be a new council
 3. **DELIVERING THE PROMISES** – As made in the business case
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Objective 1: Safe & Legal

Some of the key areas of work to be a Safe and Legal council included:

- Staff, contracts, assets and liabilities are transferred to the new authority
 - Budget for the first year of the new council is robust and agreed
 - Council Tax harmonisation policy developed
 - Revenues collected and payments made on time
 - Statutory policies and other requirements (e.g. insurance) reviewed as necessary and in place
 - Emergency planning and business continuity arrangements in place
 - Infrastructure in place for local elections
 - New constitution, committee structure and Members induction programme following elections
 - Arrangements exist for the security and protection of data
 - Minimise the impact on critical 'business as usual' activity
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Objective 2: New Council

Some of the key areas of work required to establish the New Council included:

- New name and brand
 - Clear vision with goals and actions is owned, communicated and delivered
 - Appointment of CEO, Corporate Management Team (CMT) and Service Directors
 - Customer service and access strategy including channels, service standards and processes
 - New communications strategy and protocols for the and new council
 - Baseline set of agreed KPI's to enable monitoring of performance
 - Established policy framework for the new council to operate within
 - Every member of staff knows where their place of work is and what their job is
 - Framework for future transformation established
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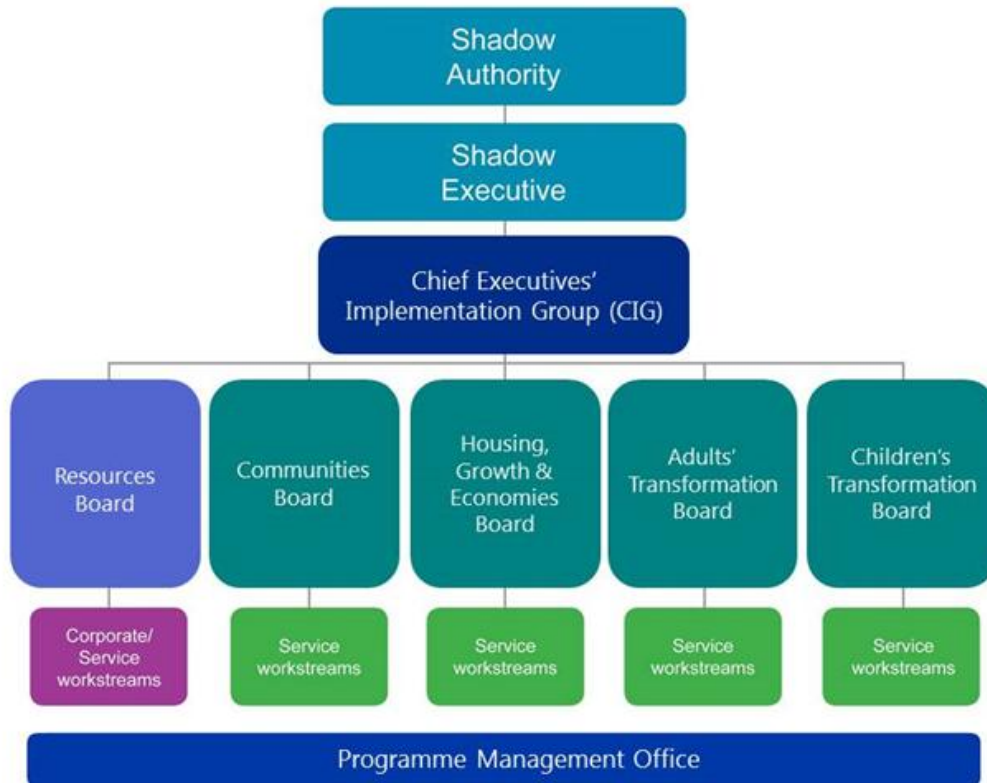
Objective 3: Promise Delivery

Some of the key areas or work for Delivering The Promises included:

- Annual savings of £18.2m realised
- New model for customer service access across the county
- A new framework for Community Boards
- Devolution offer for Town and Parish Councils
- New service models where appropriate, e.g. establishment of 5 Area Planning Committees
- Key stakeholders understand the plans for working with the new council



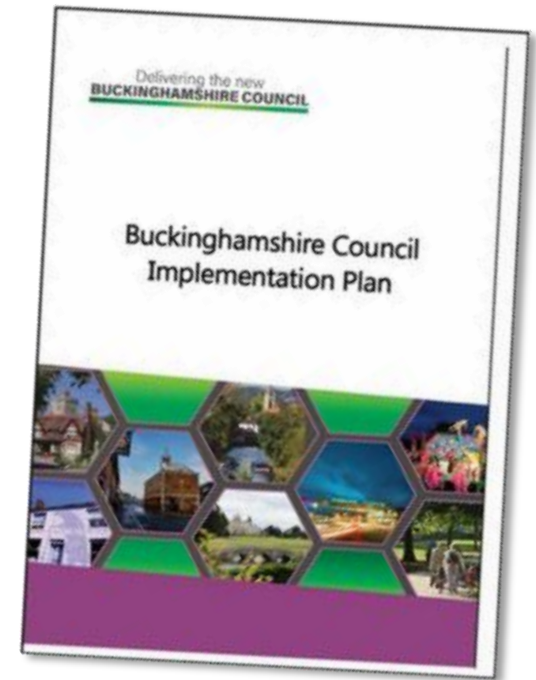
LGR Implementation Governance



- Programme structure included existing County Council boards such as Adults and Childrens transformation
- Three 'new' boards jointly chaired by County and District Officers
- Small Programme Management Office – 16 staff drawn from across all five councils.
- Additional capacity brought in as required by an external partner (Critical Friend)

Structures & Governance: PMO

- Targeted approach to setting up the PMO – key individuals across all county & districts (with backfill)
- Shared sign-off on Implementation Plan
- Single Plan & the list of 'Must dos' for vesting day. 129.
- Technical expertise & assurance as well as in-house staff
- Programme Discipline
- Delivery & outcome focused
- Physical co-location of PMO & workstream staff
- Strong PMO to co-ordinate across 28 workstreams; 485 staff on workstream groups.



[Implementation Plan v0.7 June 2019.pdf](#)

Winning Hearts and Minds

- Staff
 - Regular communication and engagement of staff across all councils – your staff are the ones who will make it happen!
- Members
 - Invited existing unitaries to brief Members and officers about their experience and used them as case studies in our communications
 - Recognise twin-hatters
- Residents
 - Regular communication, including highlighting the benefits from new council model
 - Separate website for all things about the new council and shadow authority
- Key Stakeholders
 - Fostering local support for change amongst businesses and strategic partners
 - Engaged with MPs and key partners on a very regular basis
 - Engagement with town and parish councils and VCS
 - Engagement at national level with key influencers
 - Ministers and civil servants across departments



Our Unitary Journey: Reflections

Key things that helped us?

- **Safe & Legal** was our number 1 priority.
- **Senior officer leadership team all confirmed pre-vesting day (down to tier 3 by Christmas).**
- Strategic approach enabled **balancing of existing change ('BAU') alongside LGR.**
- **Shadow structures** key for managing the transition.
- **Programme Management Office** consisting of staff from all authorities.
- Tackled **'wicked issues' early** (e.g. council tax harmonisation / waste collection / green waste).
- **Localism** not an afterthought – central to new operating model.
- **Cross-party involvement** to shape proposals (e.g. localism policy / design).
- **Communication strategy** with key stakeholders.
- **Spending protocol in place** – covering financial and asset commitments.
- Clear **Transformation Roadmap** for post-vesting day – PMO team disbanded but **morphed** into New Council Transformation Team.



Our Unitary Journey: Reflections (2)

Challenges & Learning

- **Covid & lockdowns** as new unitary went live!
- Constant **negativity on a single unitary** being too distant and not able to understand local issues.
- Words matter – refer to the '**new council**' every day.
- Complexity – **202 Shadow Authority members**, 170 parish & town councils, 1 town committee.
- **Continuing Authority** (if you can as reduces cost/time)
- Culture - active building of the new **culture** and focus on workforce development.
- Greater and earlier emphasis around understanding **contract expiry dates** of major contracts & ensuring a collective approach.
- **Golden Staple** – unsurfaced financial issues emerged / unrealistic budget assumptions.
- **Estates Strategy** – difficult political decision.
- Service Integration / Future Transformation Plans – be realistic **around priorities and timeframes**.
- **Strategic goals for One Council Transformation Post Vesting Day** – Consolidation & savings vs Demand Management Social Care



Our Unitary Benefits so far

Delivery of savings promised (£18.2 million in Business Case) BUT importantly unlocked longer term savings. Key areas:

- IT infrastructure – consolidated systems (54 down to 17 for tier 1 systems)
- Estates Strategy
- Harmonisation of Fees & Charges. Over 880 individual fees harmonised

Improved Join-up

- **Children's and Housing needs** – single point of contact following threats of eviction /Children's home expansion programme.
 - Supported Housing Strategy joined up with social care needs – critical to managing demand
 - Waste Collection and Disposal – **operational interface / collection contracts + in-house service.**
 - Environmental Health, Licensing & Trading Standards – **joint working opps** across enforcement streams / cross county partnership activity.
 - Home to School Transport and Taxi/Private Hire Licencing - harmonised policies / formalised data sharing on enforcement and issues of concern / harmonised approach on the suitability of drivers.
 - One conversation with Health & Police – easier to strategically focus on outcomes together
 - Easier customer journeys – contact centre first contact resolution ; leadership join up on interfaces.
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