



South Warwickshire Together

PROGRAMME BRIEF

South Warwickshire Together Programme

Version: 3.0

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Author: Timothy Oruye

Executive Sponsors: David Buckland, Chris Elliot

1 Document History

1.1 Document Location

Document will be held on the Programme Teams site

Revision Date	Author	Version	Summary of Changes	Changes Marked
05/07/2021	Timothy Oruye	1.0	First draft	
09/07/2021	Timothy Oruye	2.0	Initial amends from PB	
13/07/2021	Timothy Oruye	3.0	Further amends from PB	

1.2 Approvals

This document requires the following approvals:

Name / Group	Date of Issue	Version
Programme Board	13/072021	3.0
JASG	13/07/2021	3.0

1.3 Distribution

This document has additionally been distributed to:

Name / Group	Date of Issue	Status
Transformation Portfolio Holders		
Joint Management team		

2 Programme Brief Purpose

The programme brief provides a framework for the Sponsors to gain agreement and buy in from the South Warwickshire Together Programme stakeholders to the programme vision and high-level strategic objectives. Stakeholders for this programme include but are not limited to residents, businesses, partner organisations, neighbouring councils, elected members, MPs and Council staff. It describes the strategic landscape in which the programme will operate, the high level benefits expected and is a formal reference point for programme scope.

3 Programme Background and Description

At the respective meetings of Council in February 2021 both Stratford on Avon and Warwick District Council agreed the following vision statement:

“To create a single statutory South Warwickshire Council covering all of the activities currently carried out by Stratford-on-Avon District Council and Warwick District Council by 1 April 2024.”

This will require a significant programme of change activities over the next 3 year period to prepare and deliver the desired objectives.

During the past year, both Stratford-on-Avon District Council and Warwick District Council have been working together in a number of areas to respond to the coronavirus pandemic in the wake of substantial losses to income and budgets. This is coupled with the ambition of both Councils to protect improve and expand the valuable services provided to residents across South Warwickshire.

Work has already started on the production of joint Local Plan, a joint procurement process has started for a joint refuse and recycling contract and the Councils have recently implemented a joint management team. Working towards merging the two Councils builds on a long term strategic trend of significant collaboration between the two organisations. It also builds on strong foundations as there are similarities between the two Councils. Both Councils face significant financial pressures and need to make savings; merging the Councils provides the potential to improve the financial position and ensure that the Councils can continue to deliver or improve services for local communities.

There are many similarities between both Councils such as:

- Shared economic geography
- Shared sense of community between authorities
- Strong political relationships between Leaders
- Within the same County Council area

The two Councils coming together will create a super-district which will be well placed to address some of the significant strategic issues facing South Warwickshire including climate change, the economy and housing.

Public views will be crucial in determining whether a submission is made to government to request that the two Councils formally merge. Proposals will include reviewing the services provided, jointly commissioned contracts and investigating joint political leadership to create a stronger, unified voice for residents and businesses in South Warwickshire.

4 Change Drivers

The following are driving the need for change and the scope of the programme:

- Both Councils have significant financial pressures and a need to make savings in order to continue to deliver the same or better services
- Building on an established collaboration and joint working arrangement between both Councils to better serve the communities in South Warwickshire
- Enhancing delivery of a joined up focus on recovery from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic
- Retaining the status quo is not recognised by both Councils as a responsible option
- Enabling a greater voice that better represents the economic geography of South Warwickshire

5 Programme Objectives

The programme objectives are as follows:

- Designing and delivering change activities across both existing Councils during the transition to become a single Council fit for the future
- Engage with the public, partners and businesses to garner support for the proposed changes and inform on progress
- Managing milestones, scope and dependencies
- Realising benefits, mitigating risks and seeking opportunities to add more value
- Legally creating a single statutory South Warwickshire Council by 1 April 2024
- Laying the foundation for further transformation and improvement after vesting day

5.1 Benefits

The following benefits are to be targeted:

- Achieving annual net savings identified in the Medium Term Financial Plans (MTFPs) of both Councils
- Enhanced partnership working across the combined geographical area of South Warwickshire
- Increased presence, influence and strategic voice for South Warwickshire within the Midlands region
- Increased capacity and resilience to deal with significant economic challenges ensuring that local government can continue to deliver or improve services for local communities
- Improved customer experience for residents and businesses across both districts
- Increased efficiency through economies of scale
- Strengthened workforce opportunities within the new larger organisation

5.2 Critical Success Factors

Success will be demonstrated by:

- Formal Business Case proposal, supported by key stakeholders, is approved by both Councils in December 2021, subsequently submitted to MHCLG by December 2021
- Approval to merge being granted by the Secretary of State
- Roadmap to delivery of the financial benefits established
- Service areas integrated across both Councils in a phased approach by April 2024
- New Council legally formed on 1 April 2024
- Members elected to the new South Warwickshire Council in May 2024

5.3 Scope

To deliver the programme objectives, the following is in scope:

- Development and submission of a business case proposal to Central Government (**Business case proposal development**)
- Communicating and engaging with all key stakeholders appropriately using a variety of channels throughout the journey of change (**Corporate communications**)
- Establishing a revised senior leadership structure (**Leadership restructure**)
- Support the transition of staff to the new model of operation including extensive consultation, union engagement, consolidation of HR policies and procedures and creating a new training and development programme (**Organisational Development**)
- Design and deliver integrated service areas and enable optimisation beneath the restructured senior leadership team (**Service integration and optimisation**)
- Establishing and enabling a more aligned culture and new ways of working for staff and councillors to operate a Council fit for the future (**One Team Together**)
- Integrating ICT infrastructure and systems in a phased approach (**ICT / Digital**)
- Design and deliver options to consolidate the assets owned by both Councils (**Assets**)
- Consolidation of financial instruments and policies including fees and charges schedule, financial reporting, key performance indicators, bank accounts and VAT numbers (**Finance**)
- Establishing a consolidated procurement approach and seeking opportunities for improved contracts for the new Council (**Procurement**)
- Review of corporate governance arrangements, implementation of new committee structures, combining electoral services including facilitating a boundary review (**Democratic governance**)
- Creation of a more aligned constitution and legal identity (**Formal merger**)
- Development of an aligned corporate business strategy or Council Plan (**Corporate Strategy**)
- Satisfy all the conditions required in the formal merger process set by Central Government (**Formal merger**)
- Deliver the process to abolish both Councils and create a new Council (**Formal merger**)

This scope will result in a series of discrete workstreams and projects, outlined in the implementation plan (see appendix).

5.4 Constraints, Assumptions and Dependencies

The main constraints on the programme identified to date include:

- Criteria set by the Secretary of State for merging district councils required to be met include;
 1. Improve the area's local government;
 2. Command local support, in particular that the merger is proposed by all councils which are to be merged and there is evidence of a good deal of local support; and
 3. The area is a credible geography, consisting of two or more existing local government areas that are adjacent, and which, if established, would not pose an obstacle to locally-led proposals for authorities to combine to serve their communities better and would facilitate joint working between local authorities.
- Political balance and constitution of each Council could present challenges for key decisions and milestones
- Organisational structure, support infrastructures and operational approaches of each Council could present challenges to further integration and expected savings
- Corporate priorities of each Council could present challenges to scheduling of programme activity and expected savings.

Main assumptions are:

- Both Councils will agree to formally consider a business case proposal to become a single statutory authority December 2021
- The proposed change will receive a good degree of local support from residents, partners and businesses
- Regular engagement with MHCLG to be undertaken during the lifecycle of the programme
- The Secretary of State will grant approval to become a single statutory District Council
- On gaining approval from the Secretary of State, there will be an order to delay elections planned for May 2023 for a 12 month period along with instigating a local boundary review for the new Council
- In the case of Councils not agreeing to submit a proposal, further direction is sought from both Councils for next steps
- In the case of approval not being granted by the Secretary of State, further direction is sought from both Councils for next steps
- In the case a submission is not made or not approved, that the two Councils will still proceed with activities that deliver other identified benefits of Working Together including Service Integration
- The programme will at times also require input from in-house resources, with a number of projects and work streams running simultaneously. The make-up of this will change as required by the programme
- Impact on service delivery during the implementation of the programme will be closely monitored with the general intention to maintain or enhance outcomes
- Further detail will be captured at workstream and project level when these are initiated and scoped. Their key outputs and delivery to plan will feed into the programme as it progresses
- Change control for the programme will be managed by the Programme Board

Initial programme dependencies include:

- Organisational restructure across both councils beginning by aligning the Portfolios and creating a Joint Management Team then integrating services under the revised structure
- The outputs from the cross cutting workstreams could impact on the outcomes of other change activities within the Programme

For example, the organisational development policies developed in the HR / OD workstream would influence the schedule of Service Integration workstream and the change plans undertaken by the One Team Together workstream. This will need to be regularly and robustly managed at programme level

- Political context regarding local government reform may yet influence programme outcomes if alternative approaches are deemed favourable such as creating unitary councils

5.5 Risks and Opportunities

- Programme level risks are to be a standing agenda item for the South Warwickshire Together Programme Board and the Programme Board will be the escalation route for Project risks which cannot be mitigated at project level
- The Programme Risk Register will capture and monitor these as the programme progresses including the owners of the risk, any existing controls, consider additional controls and the current response to the identified risk
- The Programme Board should also consider any opportunities that arise as the programme progresses as these may become benefits
- The full risk register will be stored on the Programme Board site and reviewed regularly

6 Programme Organisation & Governance

- A Joint Arrangements Steering Group (JASG) made up of 12 Councillors from both Councils has been established to oversee the programme's implementation plan, risk register and communications plan. Further scrutiny will be implemented from both Councils. This group will meet at least 4 times a year.
- A Programme Board (PB) chaired by the Chief Executives (SDC and WDC) has been established to oversee progress, act as an escalation route for risks and issues and seek advice from key stakeholders. The PB is to meet at least monthly. In addition, regular progress reports against milestones will be required from workstreams and projects in flight.
- Workstreams and Projects will all have a designated lead officer supported by other resources appropriate to deliver the required outputs. These workgroups and project teams will regularly update the programme with progress against their milestones including any emerging risks and issues.

7 Programme Milestones & Reporting

Initial programme milestones are:

Milestone Theme	Governance group	Date range
Programme initiation	JASG	July 2021
Public consultation and engagement	JASG, Both Cabinets Both OSCs	August to November 2021
Business case proposal considered	JASG, Both Cabinets Both OSCs Both Councils	November 2021 December 2021
Gateway (1) Mid-December 2021		
Business case proposal submitted to Secretary of State	Both Councils	December 2021
Secretary of State receives representations on proposal	Both Councils	Between January 2022 and May 2022
Receive initial approval from Secretary of State	Both Councils	Between September 2022 and December 2022*
Service integration part 2	JASG	December 2022
Gateway 2 (on receipt of approval from Secretary of State)		
Formal process agreed to legally form single council	JASG Both Councils Shadow Authority formed	from January 2023*
Boundary review completed	Shadow Authority	By May 2023*
Service integration part 3	Shadow Authority	March 2024
New Council formed	Shadow Authority	1 April 2024
Members elected to new council	New elected Council	May 2024

*Dates are estimates at this stage

8 Programme Budget

A Programme budget of £600k in total over a 3 year period has been agreed by both Councils and delegated to the Programme Board.

The budget has been assumed to cover the core programme team, external support or specific advice associated with the merger. This resource could also be used for specific costs arising such as creating a new corporate identity in the form of logos and branding.

There are likely to be further costs relating to service alignment, including potential redundancies. These will need to be funded by any initial savings or may require additional budgetary provision.

9 Related Work

The programme will coordinate with the following other strategic programmes:

- Current SDC Council Priorities
- Current WDC Council Priorities
- Digital Strategy
- Assets Management Strategy
- Joint Local Plan
- Climate Change Programme

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Programme Organisation and Governance

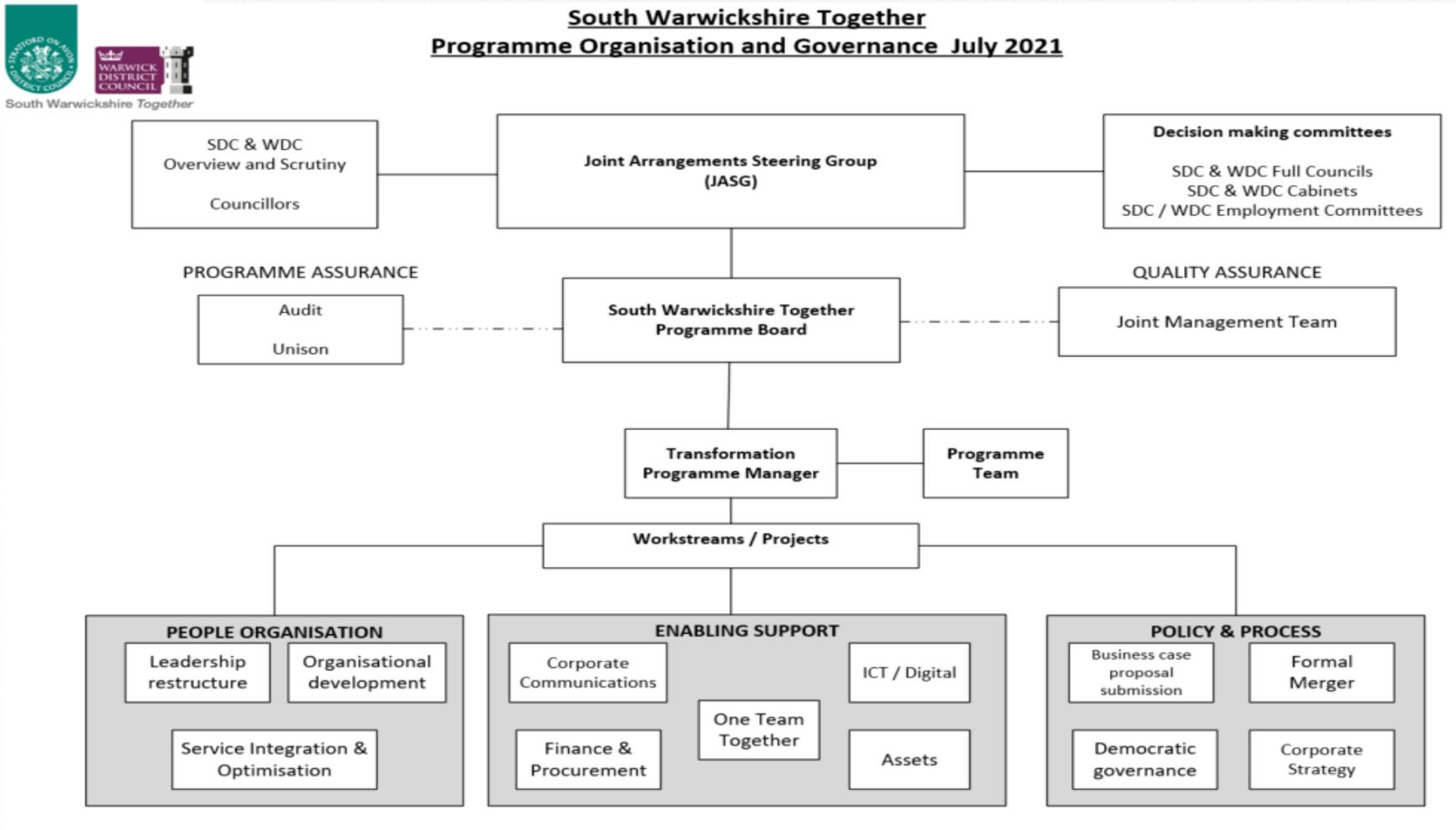
Appendix 2 Programme Implementation Plan (Outline)

Appendix 3 Programme Implementation Plan Gantt chart

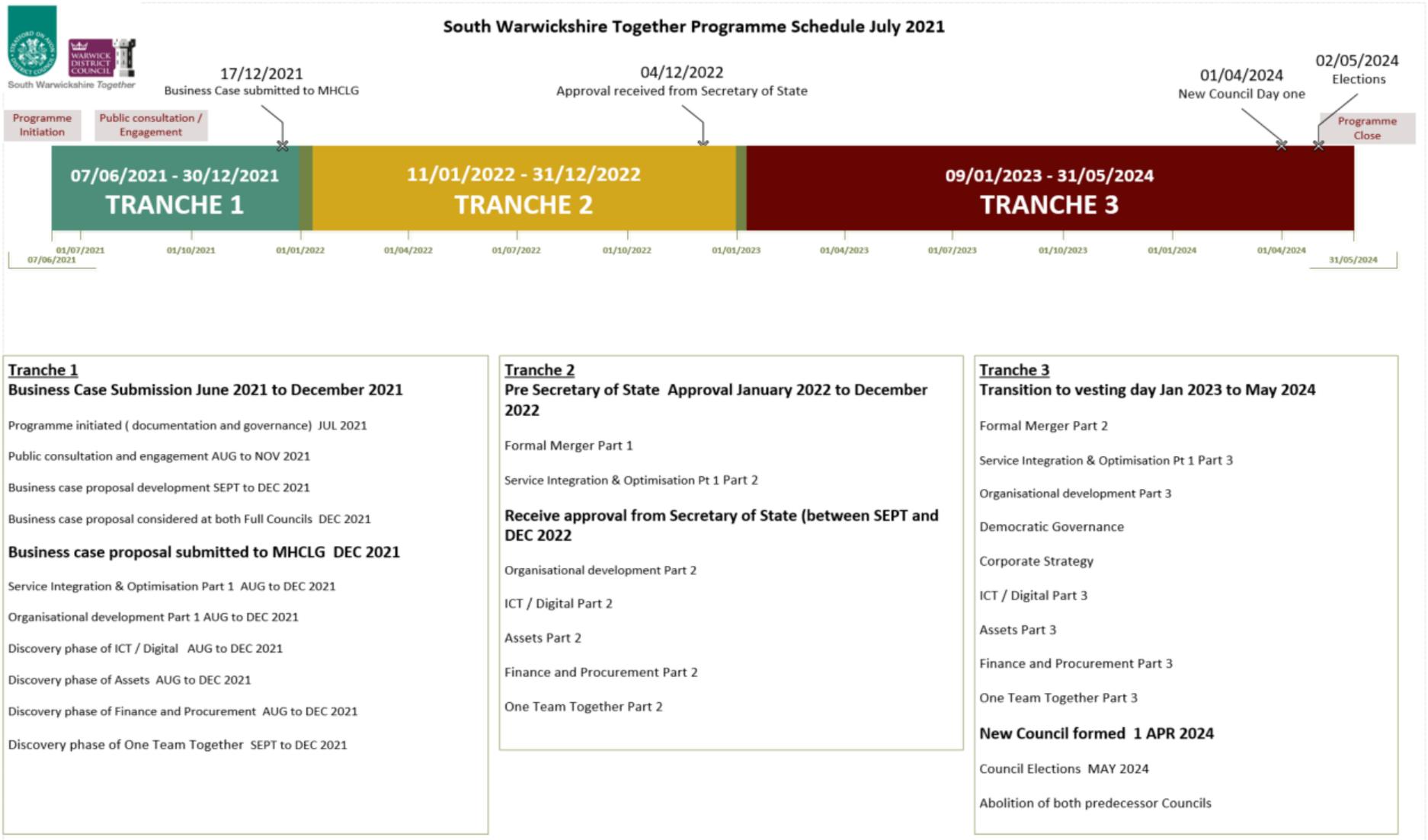
Appendix 4 South Warwickshire Together Programme Board Terms of Reference

Appendix 5 JASG Terms of Reference

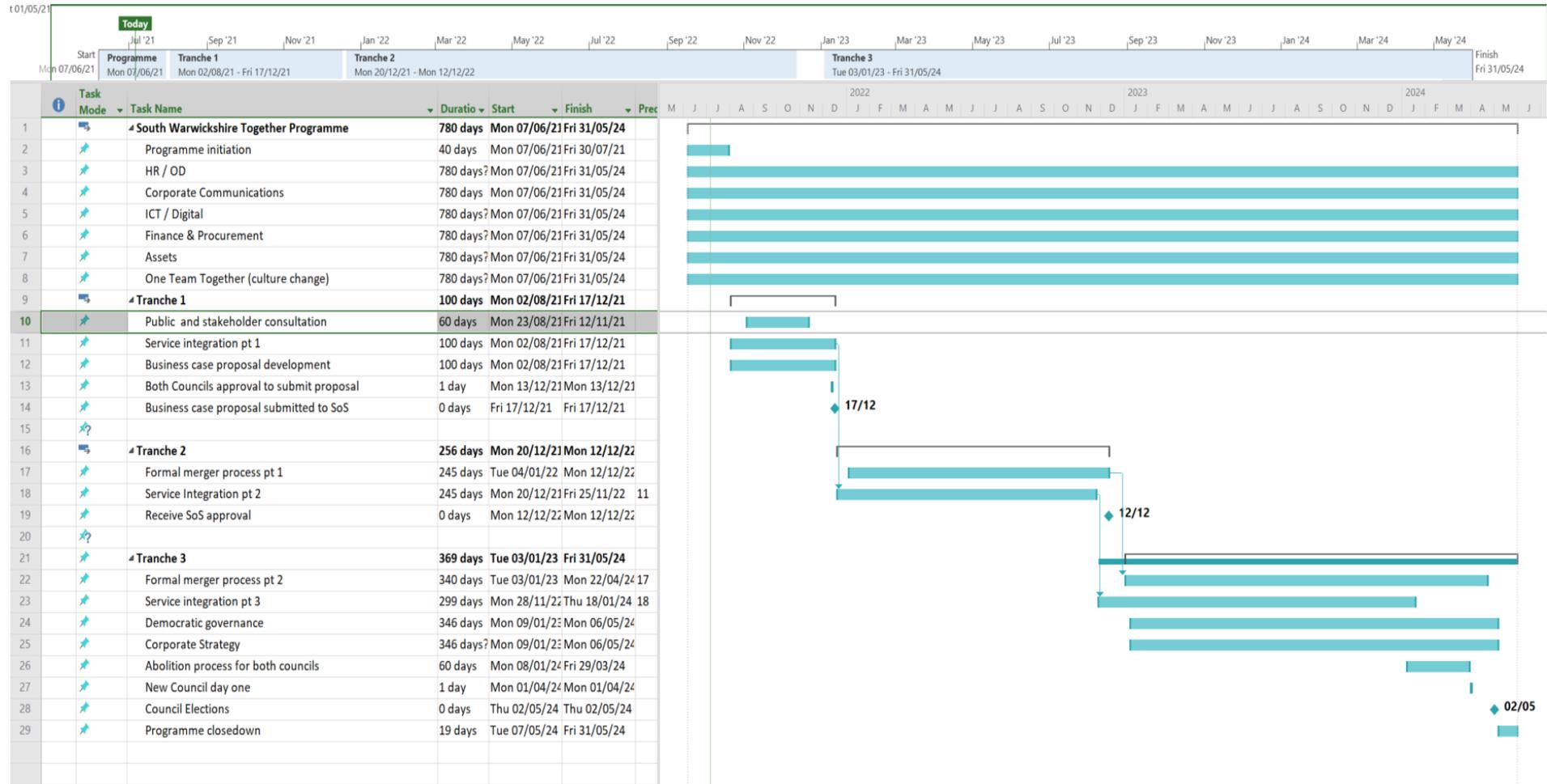
Programme Organisation and Governance Chart



Programme Implementation Plan (Outline)



Programme Implementation Gantt Chart



South Warwickshire Together Programme Board – Terms of Reference

Membership

Core Members: Chief Executives (alternate chairs), Deputy Chief Executives, Programme Director for Climate Change, Monitoring Officer, Section 151 Officer, Transformation Programme Manager, Members of Joint Management Team identified as Workstream Leads

Terms of Reference

Collectively taking responsibility for the South Warwickshire Together Programme, the Programme Board

- will approve the programmes' fundamental documentation including Programme brief, Programme implementation plan, Communications management plan and Risk register
- will initiate and oversee workstreams and projects within the South Warwickshire Together programme
- will assess and manage programme level elements including stakeholder engagement, communications, risk, issue and change management with appropriate mitigation
- will provide guidance and direction to the programme, ensuring it remains within given constraints
- will receive and review regular progress reports from workstreams and projects
- will support requests for financial and human resources for this programme
- will approve any changes or exception plans outside of agreed tolerances
- will facilitate change and champion the programme to internal and external stakeholders
- will report to the Joint Arrangements Steering Group ahead of consideration by each Councils' decision-making processes and committees

Frequency of meetings

- Meetings to be held no less than monthly to ensure the programme remains on track to deliver agreed objectives. During initiation, these will be held weekly. Frequency and duration to be reviewed regularly.
- Emergency meetings may be called by exception if recognised that any delay would be detrimental to the programme. This is at the discretion of either Chief Executive as alternating chairs.

Venue of meetings

Meetings are proposed to adopt a blended approach with potential for a combination of virtual and face to face meetings, when restrictions allow.

Stratford-on-Avon District Council (SDC) and Warwick District Council (WDC)

Joint Arrangements Steering Group (JASG) Terms of Reference

Membership

- There are twelve members in total with six members from each Council, comprising:
 - The Leader and Deputy Leader
 - Four other members representing the other political group(s), appointed by the respective Leader

In addition, three substitute members will be appointed by the respective Leader.

Terms of Reference

- To oversee and monitor the Implementation Programme, the Risk Register and the Communication Plan
- To oversee and supervise joint working across both Councils
- To consider business cases for joint working and make recommendations to each council as appropriate
- To act as the forum where issues or reports in relation to joint working are discussed prior to consideration by each councils' decision-making processes
- To receive regular reports on:
 - Progress against agreed actions
 - Realisation of projected savings
 - Emerging issues and risks together with proposed mitigation measures
- To recommend steps relating to the communication of matters relating to joint working
- To establish and maintain protocols to deal with any conflicts of interest of individual officers engaged in joint working
- To consider and recommended resolution of any dispute arising between the Councils after the implementation of joint working decisions
- To oversee the work of, and receive reports from, any sub groups which are established by JASG.

Status of JASG

JASG has no decision-making powers. It has an advisory role, making recommendations as it thinks fit to each Council, as appropriate.

Determination and implementation of any recommendations of JASG rests separately with each Council, or the Joint Committee established by The Cabinet (SDC) and The Executive (WDC) where its terms of reference allow.

Quorum

The meeting is quorate if three elected members from each Council are present.

Officer Support

The following officers from each Council are entitled to attend JSG meetings:

- The Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive(s)
- The Monitoring Officer and Joint S151 Officer
- Other Heads of Service as relevant to agenda business

Administrative support is provided on an alternate basis by the Democratic Services teams of each Council.

Frequency of Meetings

The Joint Steering Group will meet as necessary and on at least four occasions a year.

Venue of Meetings

If face to face meetings take place the venue will alternate between Leamington and Stratford-upon-Avon where possible.