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Resources and Place Scrutiny Committee

Tuesday 3 February 2026 at 6.30pm
in the Council Chamber Council Offices Market Street Newbury

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Date of despatch of Agenda: Monday 26 January 2026

For further information about this Agenda, or to inspect any background documents referred to in Part I reports, please contact Stephen Chard (Democratic Services Manager) on (01635) 519462
e-mail: stephen.chard@westberks.gov.uk

Further information and Minutes are also available on the Council's website at www.westberks.gov.uk

West Berkshire
C O U N C I L

To: Councillors Carolyne Culver (Chairman), Ross Mackinnon (Vice-Chairman), Antony Amirtharaj, Jeremy Cottam, Laura Coyle, Erik Pattenden, Christopher Read, Richard Somner and Howard Woollaston

Substitutes: Councillors Adrian Abbs, Dennis Benneyworth, Paul Dick, Billy Drummond, Alan Macro, David Marsh, Geoff Mayes, Biyi Oloko and Clive Taylor

Agenda

Part I   Page No.

Sarah Clarke
Executive Director - Resources

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Resources & Place Scrutiny Committee

3 February 2026

Item 1 – Apologies

Verbal Item

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Resources & Place Scrutiny Committee
3 February 2026

Item 2 – Declarations of interest

Verbal Item

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Agenda Item 3

Transformation funding allocation and benefits realisation

Committee considering report:	Resources and Place Scrutiny Committee
Date of Committee:	3 February 2026
Portfolio Member:	Councillor Jeff Brooks
Report Author:	Gabrielle Mancini

1   Purpose of the Report

1.1   This report provides an overview of transformation funding allocated between 2023 and 2025, summarising how total investment has translated into organisational improvements, service enhancements, and measurable financial returns. It focuses on the most significant qualitative and quantitative benefits delivered by the transformation programme.

1.2   Transformation funding has supported major changes to systems, workforce capability, processes, and asset use, enabling the Council to improve service efficiency, strengthen resilience, and deliver better outcomes for residents.

2   Recommendations

2.1   The Resources and Place Scrutiny Committee is asked to **note**:

- The overall transformation investment made since 2023.

- The significant combination of financial savings, cost avoidance, and service improvements delivered through the 2023–2025 programme.

- The ongoing work required to secure long-term benefits from projects still in delivery.

3   Implications and Impact Assessment

Implication	Commentary
Financial:	Transformation funding totalling £3.22 million between 2023 and 2025 has been used to support a programme of change that has delivered substantial financial benefits through both recurring savings and cost avoidance.

	The actual and projected financial benefits of the programme are reflected in the table in the report body below, with the aforementioned transformation funding having been primarily used to employ staff to undertake the projects. The programme's most significant financial benefits relate to: • Reduced reliance on agency staffing • Lower temporary accommodation costs • More efficient Home-to-School Transport expenditure • Process efficiencies within Business Support and across digital workflows Quantitative benefits are complemented by substantial qualitative improvements, reinforcing the programme's strategic value. This report focuses on the overall return on investment, which by 2025 is estimated at £5-6 million in validated annual savings or avoided costs, alongside significant qualitative improvements.
Human Resource:	Dedicated transformation capacity, business analysts, and specialist project roles have proven essential in driving delivery, managing complex reviews, and supporting evidence-based decision-making. The programme has contributed to workforce improvements, including a modernised recruitment offer and greater internal capability through transformation-funded roles.
Legal:	This report has no direct implications as its objective is to provide an update to the committee.
Risk Management:	Risks relate to realising long-term benefits from complex change programmes, including Care Homes Strategy, Business Support Review, and future asset optimisation.
Property:	Several projects have supported better use of Council assets, including repurposing buildings for community benefit and progressing strategic asset reviews.
Policy:	Supports Council priorities for financial sustainability and improved outcomes.

Transformation funding allocation and benefits realisation

	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Commentary
Equalities Impact:				
A Are there any aspects of the proposed decision, including how it is delivered or accessed, that could impact on inequality?		x		This report is an update to Scrutiny, so has no impact in and of itself.
B Will the proposed decision have an impact upon the lives of people with protected characteristics, including employees and service users?		x		This report is an update to Scrutiny, so has no impact in and of itself.
Environmental Impact:		x		This report is an update to Scrutiny, so has no impact in and of itself.
Health Impact:		x		This report is an update to Scrutiny, so has no impact in and of itself.
ICT Impact:		x		This report is an update to Scrutiny, so has no impact in and of itself.
Digital Services Impact:		x		This report is an update to Scrutiny, so has no impact in and of itself.
Council Strategy Priorities:		x		This report is an update to Scrutiny, so has no impact in and of itself.
Core Business:		x		This report is an update to Scrutiny, so has no impact in and of itself.

Data Impact:		x		This report is an update to Scrutiny, so has no impact in and of itself.

Consultation and Engagement:	Joseph Holmes- Chief Executive
	Paul Coe- Executive Director- ASC
	Sarah Clarke- Executive Director- Resources
	AnnMarie Dodds- Executive Director- Children's
	Clare Lawrence- Executive Director- Place
	Shannon Coleman-Slaughter- Section 151 Officer
	Stacey Bradshaw- Service Lead- Projects
	Paula Goodwin- Service Lead- HR

4   Executive Summary

4.1   Between 2023 and 2025, the Council invested transformation funding to modernise systems, strengthen service delivery, and improve outcomes for residents. The programme delivered significant successes, particularly in 2023–2025, with total investment was strongly aligned with the savings and benefits achieved.

Overall return

4.2   The Council invested £3.22 million in transformation funding between 2023 and 2025, primarily on staffing costs to support and deliver the projects mentioned below. By 2025, the programme delivered £5–6 million in validated annual savings or avoided costs, with further benefits expected from ongoing projects.

4.3   Alongside financial value, the programme delivered substantial qualitative benefits, including better family support, improved resident experiences, stronger digital capability, and more efficient internal processes.

Major achievements

4.4   The Walnut Close project reduced reliance on B&B placements by converting an underused asset into safe, stable accommodation for families, improving outcomes and reducing pressure on Children's Services.

4.5   The Talent Attraction project modernised recruitment and reduced agency staffing by 36 percent, improving workforce stability and delivering major cost benefits.

4.6 The Home-to-School Transport project introduced new processes that improved efficiency and reduced costs.

4.7 LIFT and related initiatives strengthened pathways for vulnerable residents and improved access to support.

4.8 Digital and systems improvements, such as Microsoft 365 and electronic sealing, improved efficiency and reduced administrative burden.

Overall impact:

4.9 The programme delivered a balanced set of quantitative benefits (savings, cost avoidance, income) and qualitative benefits (improved wellbeing, faster processes, greater capacity, improved outcomes for vulnerable residents). These successes demonstrate that transformation funding provides strong strategic value beyond financial metrics alone.

5 Supporting Information

Introduction

5.1 The transformation programme aimed to deliver long-term financial savings, cost avoidance, and service improvements. Funding supported work across recruitment, planning, asset optimisation, digital innovation, and service redesign.

Background

5.2 Transformation funding was introduced to enable the Council to invest in projects that deliver long-term financial savings, cost avoidance, and service improvements. Since 203/14, the Council has allocated funding to a range of initiatives, including projects in recruitment, planning, and partnership development. Early investments focused on establishing the necessary infrastructure and capacity for change, with benefits expected to accrue over multiple years. The programme has evolved to address emerging priorities, such as asset optimisation and service redesign, and has adapted in response to project outcomes and organisational learning.

Summary of Transformation Funding and benefits

5.3 This section provides an outcome-focused summary of the major successes between 2023 and 2025, showing how the programme's investment aligned with the value generated.

2023/24: Building capacity and initiating change

5.4 Key achievements included:

- Establishing a dedicated Transformation Team.
- Initiating major service reviews, including Care Homes Strategy and the Business Support Review.

- Delivering improvements to recruitment, the corporate website, and internal systems (e.g. Microsoft 365, Electronic Sealing).
- Starting the shift from foundational work to measurable operational impact.

5.5   Although financial benefits were modest during this year, the groundwork supported the major savings realised in 2024/25.

2024/25: Highest returns and strongest outcomes

5.6   This year delivered the largest concentration of completed projects and benefits, including:

Walnut Close

The conversion of Walnut Close from an underused care home into high-quality temporary accommodation and family time space has had a clear and immediate impact. It sharply reduced the Council's reliance on unsuitable and expensive B&B placements, avoiding close to £600k in annual costs and generating income through housing benefit, while giving families in crisis access to safe and stable accommodation. The facility now provides a consistent and appropriate setting for court-mandated family time, which had previously been difficult to deliver reliably. The project shows how repurposing existing assets can produce both financial returns and meaningful improvements in support for vulnerable households.

Talent attraction

The Talent Attraction programme modernised the Council's recruitment offer and strengthened its employer brand. Updated recruitment systems and clearer messaging about the Council's employment proposition helped reduce agency staffing spend by 36 percent, generating recurring financial savings while improving workforce stability. Services have benefited from more consistent staffing and reduced turnover. The programme shows that targeted investment in workforce capability generates both operational and financial value.

Home-to-School transport

Work on Home-to-School Transport introduced new routing, contracting, and operational processes that have reshaped the service. These changes delivered substantial annual savings and increased cost avoidance while improving the reliability and compliance of transport arrangements. The improvements have strengthened the long-term sustainability of the service and demonstrate how process redesign can deliver recurring efficiencies at scale.

LIFT and support for vulnerable residents

The LIFT programme and related initiatives strengthened support for residents who need early help or more intensive intervention. The changes improved access to mental health support for children in care, contributing to greater placement stability and fewer crisis-driven placements. Most of the benefits are qualitative, but the long-term potential for

reducing pressure on high-cost services is significant. The work has created clearer pathways for residents and better-coordinated support.

Digital and systems improvements

Investments in Microsoft 365, electronic sealing, and improvements to the Council's website enabled more efficient working practices across multiple services. These upgrades reduced administrative burden, improved data handling, and created smoother workflows. Although the benefits often take the form of time saved rather than direct financial gain, they underpin many of the efficiencies delivered across the wider programme.

Value of dedicated transformation capacity

The period from 2023 to 2025 demonstrated the value of having a dedicated transformation function. Internal capacity provided consistent governance, clearer business cases, and more reliable delivery of complex projects. This capability helped the organisation move at pace, improved the quality of implementation, and increased confidence across services in managing change. The team created a stronger pipeline of opportunities, ensured investment decisions were evidence based, and aligned project selection with corporate priorities. The combination of transformation roles, business analysts, and specialist support has been central to delivering the programme's financial and non-financial benefits.

External capacity through TVI

In 2024/25, the Council supplemented internal capability with external support from TVI. Their work focused on developing business cases for several digital and efficiency projects, providing independent challenge and validation that strengthened the resulting proposals. TVI accelerated the development of key schemes that are now ready for delivery. While financial benefits will only begin to materialise over the coming years, the business cases indicate strong future savings and wider improvements to digital capability and service efficiency.

Future pipeline and expected returns

The Council now has a defined pipeline of projects supported by early feasibility work and business cases. Work on Chestnut Walk is expected to reduce homelessness-related expenditure and cut B&B use. The Market Street meeting facility project aims to make better use of Council-owned space and reduce external bookings. The commercialisation of Shaw House is focused on increasing income from an existing asset. Wider strategic asset reviews will identify opportunities for disposal, repurposing, or improved utilisation. Children's Commissioning is also progressing early-stage work to improve placement pathways and strengthen in-house provision, with business cases indicating a strong potential to reduce high-cost external placements over the medium term. Based on the emerging business cases, these programmes have the potential to deliver significant financial returns over the next three to five years as well as improvements to service environments and reduced operational pressure.

Overall, the transformation funds deployed from 2022/23 to 2025/26 have enabled significant outcomes: approximately £5-6 million in validated annual savings or cost avoidance by 2025), plus important qualitative improvements in services (e.g. improved

family support, better processes, enhanced capacity in critical areas). Some projects did not proceed as originally planned (e.g. care homes outsourcing), highlighting risks, but even these projects have pivoted to alternate approaches to secure future value (e.g. asset sales). The Council continues to monitor these projects to ensure that projected benefits are fully captured and sustained in the coming years. The actual and projected financial benefits of the programme are reflected in the tables below, with the aforementioned £3.22m of transformation funding having been primarily used to employ staff to undertake the projects:

Project	Year	Additional funding allocated	Savings delivered	Cost avoidance delivered	Income generated	Projected savings
Walnut TA	25	£100k homelessness grant		£524k recurring	£34k recurring	
Walnut Family Time	24	£18k capital		£130k recurring		
Talent Attraction	23-25	None	Senior campaigns managed internally, saving approx. £130k in fees to date. 28 agency-to-direct conversions since April 2024, saving £421,231.	Compared to 2022/23 agency spend has been reduced by circa: *£2.5m in 2023/24 *£4.5m in 2024/25		It is of note that Q3 2025/26 forecasts indicate an additional reduction in agency spend for this year compared to 2022/23 of over £6.5m.
Business Support Review – Phase 1	23-26	None	£30k recurring			£100k recurring

This shows a strong return on the investment made, with delivered and recurring benefits already exceeding £5 million and continuing to grow year on year. The scale of cost avoidance in areas such as temporary accommodation and agency staffing demonstrates that relatively small allocations of transformation funding have produced large and sustained gains. Because many of these benefits recur annually and further projects are still coming online, the long-term return is set to outstrip the original outlay by a wide margin, reinforcing the value of continued investment in transformation capacity.

Project	Year	Additional funding allocated	Projected savings
Chestnut Walk	26-27	£1.1m combined capital, CIL and homelessness grant	£500,000 per year cost avoidance £40,000-£60,000 per year income from housing benefit £30,000-£50,000 per year saving on building running costs
Children's Commissioning	25-28	£1.8m transformation funding in 25/26	£3,251,717 Cost avoidance by 27/28
TVI- Adult Social Care	26-29	£887k transformation funding over 4 years from 25/26	£120,000 per year (combined direct savings + cost avoidance) This represents a conservative estimate.
TVI- App project	26	£65k transformation funding in 25/26	£80k recurring saving on systems costs
Laburnum TA project	26	£40k in homelessness grant	£41k recurring cost avoidance. £10k income.
Turnhams Green relocation	26	£18k capital	£118k recurring
Total	-	£3.91m	£4.21

The projected savings in this table indicate that the long-term return on the transformation programme will continue to exceed the original investment. The forward pipeline shows major recurring gains, including £500,000 per year cost avoidance from Chestnut Walk, £3.25 million in cost avoidance from Children's Commissioning by 2027/28, and further annual efficiencies from the TVI and digital projects, along with smaller but steady returns from asset-related schemes. These projections demonstrate that the benefits still to come are larger than those already delivered, and that the programme is positioned to generate sustained financial value well beyond its initial outlay.

Proposals

5.7   The Resources and Place Scrutiny Committee is informed of the allocation and impact of Transformation funding as detailed within the report and its appendices.

6   Other options considered

6.1   The main alternative to the funded projects was to maintain the status quo. This was not recommended, as it would have meant forgoing opportunities for savings and service improvements. Other potential projects were considered but not funded, either due to lower projected impact or feasibility concerns.

7   Conclusion

7.1   Transformation funding has enabled the Council to invest in projects with strong potential for cost avoidance and improved outcomes. The most immediate returns have been realised in Walnut Close, Talent Attraction, and Children's Commissioning.

Transformation funding allocation and benefits realisation

> Strategic projects such as Care Homes and Business Support Review require ongoing monitoring to ensure that the anticipated benefits are delivered.

Subject to Call-In:

Yes: ☐   No: ☒

The item is due to be referred to Council for final approval   ☐

Delays in implementation could have serious financial implications for the Council   ☐

Delays in implementation could compromise the Council's position: ☐

Considered or reviewed by Scrutiny Commission or associated Committees, Task Groups within preceding six months   ☒

Item is Urgent Key Decision   ☐

Report is to note only   ☒

Resources & Place Scrutiny Committee
3 February 2026

Item 4 – Asset Disposals

Item 5 – Effectiveness of Project Management

Item 6 – Mosaic Briefing Note

Verbal Items

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