Appendix B: Programme Lessons Learnt

What went well?

The programme delivered an unusually large level of change for an authority of this size. It successfully implemented and migrated several major IT systems at the same time, brought a critical frontline service in-house, and moved to a new ICT infrastructure and security provider. All of this was delivered within a tight timeframe and high operational risk, without any significant disruption to essential statutory services.

The programme demonstrated strong delivery discipline, successfully coordinating multiple interdependent workstreams including finance systems, regulatory platforms, customer services, environmental services digitisation, HR and payroll migration, elections systems, and ICT infrastructure transition. Managing these dependencies effectively reduced overall risk and kept the organisation running smoothly.

Governance arrangements were robust and proportionate, supported by a multidisciplinary Programme Management Office providing structured reporting, risk management, dependency tracking and escalation routes. Independent internal audit provided substantial assurance, giving confidence that programme controls, risk management and governance arrangements were operating effectively throughout delivery.

The programme successfully delivered the insourcing of Customer Services, ensuring continuity of customer access while improving financial control, service resilience and long-term sustainability. This included mobilisation of a new staffing model, implementation of new telephony and CRM systems, and redesign of operating processes, all delivered within fixed contractual deadlines.

The transition to a new ICT infrastructure and security provider represented a high-risk milestone and was delivered on schedule with no unplanned service outages, strengthening cyber security posture, infrastructure stability and long-term supplier resilience. This significantly reduced legacy risk exposure and improved organisational preparedness for future digital delivery.

The programme delivered tangible service improvements for residents and staff, including the launch of new digital self-service capability for waste services, improved customer access channels, modernised regulatory platforms, and enhanced financial and workforce systems. These changes support channel shift, automation, improved data quality and more responsive service delivery.

Delivery was achieved despite constrained internal capacity, market volatility in specialist skills, and compressed delivery windows. The programme team demonstrated high levels of resilience, adaptability and problem-solving capability, responding quickly to emerging risks and maintaining delivery momentum without compromising governance standards.

Stakeholder engagement and communication were consistently strong. officers, Members, partners and suppliers remained informed and engaged through structured reporting, dashboards, briefings and escalation pathways. This transparency maintained organisational confidence during a prolonged period of complex change and enabled timely decision-making.

The programme improved the organisation’s capability and maturity in programme management, digital delivery, supplier management, and benefits tracking. It also established repeatable governance frameworks, templates, and assurance processes that provide a sustainable foundation for future transformation beyond this programme.

What did not go so well?

While the programme achieved its primary objectives, several challenges were encountered during delivery which provide important learning for future transformation activity. These issues largely arose from the scale and concurrency of change, constrained delivery timescales driven by fixed contractual exit deadlines, and market conditions affecting supplier capacity and internal specialist skills availability.

The most significant operational challenge related to the stabilisation of the Arcus regulatory system following go-live. Although the system achieved technical deployment within programme timelines, early operational performance, particularly in the Land Charges service area was impacted by configuration complexity, data migration quality issues and integration dependencies. This resulted in reduced

productivity within affected services during the initial stabilisation period and increased reliance on manual workarounds while remediation activity was undertaken.

Root cause analysis showed that tight testing timescales limited thorough testing, including high-volume, scenario-based user acceptance testing and phased operational rollout. Fixed contract exit deadlines reduced flexibility and contingency. While governance arrangements balanced risk appropriately, the experience highlighted the need for stronger readiness checks and acceptance criteria for complex, business-critical systems.

Workforce capacity and continuity presented an additional challenge. The programme relied on a relatively small internal delivery teams operating across multiple concurrent projects, alongside specialist external resources in a constrained market. Staff turnover, recruitment lead times and onboarding requirements created periods of reduced continuity, increasing pressure on remaining team members and limiting knowledge transfer resilience.

Supplier capacity and dependency risks were heightened by broader market demand for digital transformation expertise across the public sector. In several cases, supplier resource availability fluctuated during critical delivery phases, reducing flexibility and increasing reliance on escalation mechanisms to maintain delivery momentum. While contractual controls were available, exercising leverage in compressed timescales proved challenging.

Running several high-risk implementations at the same time increased organisational change pressure. Frontline services had to support testing, training, data validation, and operational transitions while continuing to deliver statutory services. Although teams showed strong commitment, this placed strain on operational resilience and limited capacity for wider service improvements during peak delivery periods.

Data migration proved more complex than expected due to poor legacy data quality, inconsistent historical standards, and fragmented ownership across systems. As a result, extra work was needed after go-live to clean and validate data to ensure reliable reporting and operational confidence.

Overall, these challenges were well managed and highlight the need for realistic capacity planning, stronger readiness checks, better supplier mobilisation controls, and structured post-implementation stabilisation for future large-scale transformation programmes.

There are many lessons that can be learned from the Strategic Commissioning Programme. The lessons learned workshop output has identified key themes and lessons learned, The table below presents those which were most common and/or significant when assessing the feedback and evidence.

Programme Phase	**Theme**	**Key Lessons Learned**
Mobilisation & Governance Setup	Operational Readiness and Acceptance Criteria	We should clearly set and consistently use standards for operational acceptance. This includes meeting basic performance levels, having proper reporting, being ready for business continuity, and getting user sign-off. Go-live decisions should be based on quality, not deadlines, and deployments should be delayed if there are still major risks.
Change, Training & Adoption	Change Management and Engagement	Change management should run throughout the programme, not just at go-live. This means ongoing communication, visible leadership support, staff involvement, reinforced training, and regular feedback
Cutover, Go-Live & Stabilisation	Supplier Assurance and Mobilisation Readiness	Formal checks should be put in place to confirm suppliers are ready before major deployment stages. These checks should be based on evidence that the system is properly configured, integrated, migrated, and supported, with clear escalation paths. Contract protections should be actively used, not treated as a box-ticking exercise.

Mobilisation & Governance Setup	Capacity and Workforce Resilience	Future programmes should realistically plan for internal capacity, availability of specialist skills, and cover for staff turnover or sickness. Delivery should not depend on a few key individuals or short-term contractors. Succession planning, knowledge sharing, and early workforce planning should be built in from the start.
Build, Migration & Testing	Data migration	Focus early on getting data right — with clear ownership, responsibilities, proper cleansing, the right tools, timely migration, and clear leadership. Keep tight control over technical system environments.
Build, Migration & Testing	User Acceptance Testing	Testing showed that limited system knowledge made it difficult to create effective test scripts and scenarios. In future, test planning should involve the right people from the business and allow enough time and resources for testing.
Design & Architecture	Process review and re-design	Make sure current ('as-is') processes and their weaknesses are fully understood so issues can be fixed early where possible or addressed as a focused part of the implementation. Ensure early engagement with key service users and ensure the As Is exercise is initiated prior to any soft market testing. Key functions should also be stress-tested to ensure they can cope with implementation pressures while continuing business-as-usual work.

		Specification design should involve the right people from across the organisation, with collaboration as a key priority.
Go-Live & Post-Implementation	Go Live Readiness	Go-live readiness should be quality-driven, not date-driven. Hypercare and post-go-live support are critical to stabilisation. This was proven in multiple projects within the programme. Early operational ownership improves long-term outcomes.