Subject:	Physical Programme Update
Date:	22 March 2019
Reporting Officer:	Gerry Millar, Director of Property & Projects
	Ronan Cregan, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources
Contact Officer:	Sinead Grimes, Programme Office Manager

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	**Yes** ☐ **No** ☒

If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?

After Committee Decision ☐
After Council Decision ☐
Some time in the future ☐
Never ☐

Call-in
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?   **Yes** ☒ **No** ☐

1.0	**Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues**
1.1	The Council's Capital programme is a rolling programme of investment which either improves the existing Council facilities or provides new Council assets. This report highlights the status of projects under the Programme along with projects recommended to be moved Stages.
2.0	**Recommendations**
2.1	The Committee is asked to –
	Projects

	- **IT Programme - Replacement of the NI Planning Portal** – agree the recommendation that the Council **supports the DfI-led regional project to replace the current Northern Ireland Planning Portal with another shared regional IT system**. Members are asked to note that this is subject to
	
	  - the capital cost to Local Government being split evenly between the 11 councils with the operating costs to be determined in the context of the contract awarded (as agreed by SOLACE);
	  - the regional project demonstrating clear and robust progress – this includes commitment from all Council by April 2019;
	  - BCC being part of the first wave of councils to implement the new IT system; and
	  - BCC taking a lead role in the project, including representation on the Project Governance Board and providing staff resources to the core project team. The resources required for this are 2 x Grade PO4 posts for a temporary period of 3 years. Members are asked to agree this resource support and to note this will be part of the Council's capital contribution towards the project
	
	- **IT Programme – Customer Focus Programme** – Members have agreed an ambitious Customer Focus Strategy for the Council which has been designed to significantly improve the quality of the services that the Council provide while substantially reducing the costs of service delivery. Work is already underway on the delivery of the strategy however the effective implementation of the strategy will require an associated IT Programme to underpin it and to ensure the Customer Focus strategy can be successfully delivered
	
	Movements
	
	- In light of the timescales required (Planning Portal – commitment from all local councils by April 2019 and Customer Focus - to deliver on the agreed customer focus strategy) it is recommended that both projects are **moved to Stage 3 – Committed on the Capital Programme.** It is however recommended that both projects are held at *Tier 0 – Schemes at Risk* pending satisfactory tender returns. An update will be brought back to Committee at this stage along with the final budget allocation and confirmation that this is within the affordability limits of the Council.
	
	- In addition Members are asked to agree that the necessary procurement processes be initiated with contracts to be awarded on the basis of most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver for the above projects as required.

3.0	**Main report** Key Issues

3.1	**IT Programme- NI Planning Portal Replacement**

Senior Responsible Owner (SRO)	Alistair Reid (Aidan Thatcher)
Client Department	Place and Economy (Planning Service & Building Control)

Members will be aware that the Northern Ireland Planning Portal (NIPP) provides the public website interface which citizens use to find information and comment on planning applications. It also provides back-office software that the Council's Planning Service uses to process planning applications as well as supporting the administration of regional property certificates. The NIPP was implemented by the former Department of Environment in 2010 as a central IT solution and was inherited by the 11 councils as a shared system in 2015 on the transfer of planning powers to local government. The contract for the Planning Portal is managed by the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) and is due to expire at the end of March 2019. DfI is currently negotiating a contract modification to ensure continued technical support for the NIPP beyond March 2019 until the end of 2020.

Members will be aware that the current NIPP is far from fit for purpose and is a significant impediment to the Council for further improving its planning service. The NIPP was introduced in 2010 as a hybrid solution based on a Commercial off the Shelf (COTS) product that has been heavily customised for Northern Ireland purposes. This has meant that the COTS element has not followed the natural upgrade path and is several years behind the latest version. **The need to replace the Planning Portal by 2019/20 is a critical service risk.**

Since 2016, local government has been participating in the DfI-led regional project that is examining the options to replace the NIPP. The Council agreed to participate and contribute to the cost of the regional project. Unfortunately, the project has been delayed whilst the Councils agreed the minimum requirements upon which the Draft Outline Business Case was built, and to agree the funding model, and how much contribution from the Department v Local Government. DfI have now published a revised Outline Business Case (OBC) in January 2019. The recommendation is to replace the NIPP with another shared regional system remains and it proposes to fast-track the process with implementation by 2022. The Department's proposals (as agreed with Local Councils via SOLACE) set out in the OBC are:

- that the NIPP is replaced with a single regional IT system shared between the 11 councils and DfI;

- that the IT system will be a COTS product to meet the requirements of the regionally agreed Minimum Viable Product;

- the new system will allow some local configuration to meet individual council needs (e.g. reports, templates, searching etc.); and

- that procurement will follow the Competitive Procedure with Negotiation.

Timing – Due to the limitations with support of the ongoing system Councils are being requested to confirm their support for the new regionally led proposal by April 2019. If this is agreed then it is anticipated that a new system will be in place by 2022.

Costs – A financing model has been agreed by SOLACE with 45% of the capital costs to be funded by DfI, with the remainder to be evenly split of between the 11 councils with operating costs to be determined in the context of the contract awarded. Members are asked to note that indicative costs have been tested as part of the OBC process however the total cost will not be known until the tender return.

In parallel the Council has been examining other options which are available and an alternative to BCC agreeing to the Department's regional solution is for it to procure its own standalone IT system. Officers have undertaken market research to establish the availability and cost of planning IT solutions in the market place.

Officers have appraised the options and are **recommending to Members that the Council supports the DfI-led regional project** as opposed to the Council procuring a stand-alone system. There are a number of reasons for this including that -

- the regional option provides greater capacity to deliver and there would be a significantly reduced level of risk overall

- BCC procuring a standalone IT system would likely result in political fallout with the Department and other 11 councils as it would be a serious setback to the regional project.

- would also likely impinge on NI customers who would have to use two different public website interfaces, which is far from ideal in terms of consistency across the region.

- the costs of both options are likely to be similar, although there is a greater costs risk around data migration if BCC were to go alone. The BCC standalone option would also require significantly greater up-front capital investment and staff resourcing.

Members are therefore asked to agree that the Council supports the DFI-led regional solution subject to the following:

- BCC taking a lead role in the project e.g. in the areas of procurement, finalisation of the specification, design, build, implementation and governance. This will include representation on the Project Governance Board and providing staff resources to the core project team;

- the full Minimum Viable Produce is required (not a "MVP-light option). This would deliver all of the functionality that would enable critical service improvements, particularly online submission functionality;

- the cost to local government is split evenly between the 11 councils in terms of capital for the product, and operating costs to be determined in the context of the contract awarded;

- the regional project demonstrates clear and robust progress, including commitment from the other councils, by no later than April 2019; and

- BCC is part of the first wave of councils to implement the new IT system

Members will note from the above the proposal that the Council provides staff resources to support the new system. This resource is crucial as it will enable BCC to take a lead role in the implementation of the project and mean that the new IT system best meets the Council's needs. The Department has also confirmed that the greater staff resource the Council contributes to the project, the less cash contribution it will need to make. Members are therefore asked to agree 2 x Grade PO4 posts for a temporary period of 3 years to support the project as part of the Council's capital contribution.

Members are asked to agree that the **IT Programme- NI Planning Portal Replacement project be moved to Stage 3 - Committed on the Capital Programme given the timescales and the need for an agreement from Council's by April 2019. It is however recommended that this project is held at Tier 0- - Schemes at Risk pending the final tender return.** An update will be brought back to Committee at this stage along with the final budget allocation and confirmation that this is within the affordability limits of the Council.

Members are asked to note that a separate report was brought to the Planning Committee on 12th March regarding the proposed way forward for this project and highlighting that this was subject to approval by the SP&R Committee.

| 3.2 | **IT Programme- Customer Focus** |

Senior Responsible Owner (SRO)	Ronan Cregan
Client Department	Finance and Resources Services

Members will be aware that Council have approved the **Customer Focus Programme**, which will deliver Council services differently, in a more integrated way that is focused on the needs of the people. The customer focussed business strategy has the potential to significantly improve the quality of the services that the Council provide, while substantially reducing the costs of service delivery. The business strategy will help the Council to focus better on the needs of its customers; better understand the cost of service delivery; realise efficiency savings; and provide customer insight to improve decisions making.

Members will be aware that an integral part of the Customer Focus Programme is the necessary technology requirements and back up. The anticipated outputs of the IT Programme- Customer Focus project includes; corporate CRM implementation, telephony solution to deliver customer focus requirements, new website design and content management system, new integration platform, mobile application development platform and internet service resilience. It is envisaged that the outcomes of this project will be a customer hub with enhanced customer contact experience; enhanced technology; streamlined website and applications that are easy to navigate; and enhanced quality of data and customer insights that would be used to improve business performance.

As outlined above the Customer Focus IT Programme will contain a number of distinct but inter-related IT projects. Officers have already undertaken research on the potential solutions. However it is not possible at this point to accurately allocate a budget for this Programme. The only way to obtain definitive costings will be to go out to the market via an open procurement process.

In order to support the agreed Customer Focus Strategy and the timescales that have been agreed by Members as part of this it is recommended that the associated Customer Focus IT Programme is moved to Stage 3 – Committed on the Capital Programme. This will ensure that the technological solutions required can be procured on time. It is however recommended that this Programme is held at *Tier 0 – Schemes at Risk* pending the tender return prices. Further updates will be brought back to Committee as this Programme progresses along with the final budget allocation and confirmation that this is within the affordability limits of the Council.

In addition Members are asked to agree that the necessary procurement processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate 'framework' arrangements) be initiated for the Customer Focus IT Programme with contracts to be awarded on the basis of most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver for the above projects as required.

3.3	**Financial & Resource Implications**
	Financial –- The final budget for both projects will be brought back to Committee for sign-off and confirmation that it is within the affordability limits of the Council upon receipt of the tender returns. Both projects will be held at Tier 0 pending this.
	Resources – Planning Portal - 2 x Grade PO4 posts for a temporary period of 3 years to support the project as part of the Council's capital contribution
	IT Programme – Customer Focus– Officer time to deliver as required
3.4	**Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment**
	All capital projects are screened as part of the stage approval process

4.0	**Appendices – Documents Attached**
	None.