

Property Rationalisation Programme

Date: 7th September 2023

Corporate and Resources Scrutiny committee



Somerset
Council

Items to discuss

- Brief background to the property rationalisation programme
- Programme governance
- Project updates

Note: The Committee is asked to consider at what stage it would like future updates regarding the property rationalisation programme

Background

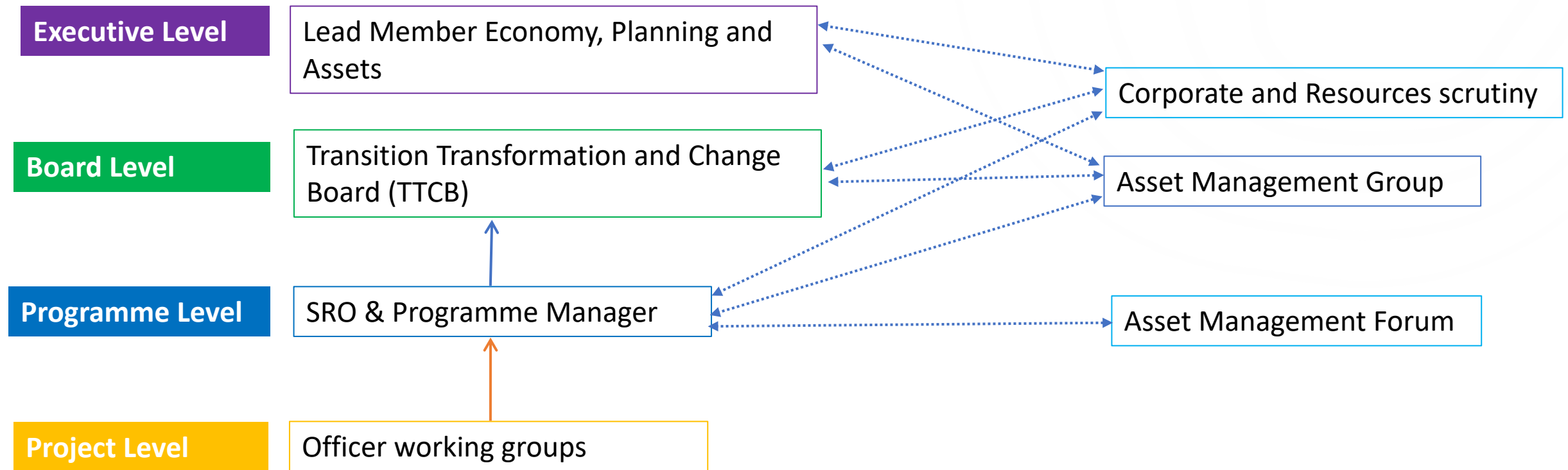
- Post covid working has seen a dramatic change in the way that offices are used and has resulted in significant under-utilisation of office buildings. Additionally, now that the 5 former Councils have merged to form one Somerset Council there is an over-supply of office accommodation.
- The LGR programme board in November 2022 endorsed the establishment of a property rationalisation programme, with an initial focus on office / customer service sites, encompassing all operational property requirements for the new council.
- This is a large and complex programme that will be broken down into manageable phases.
- The LGR programme board endorsed the development of full business cases for early rationalisation opportunities identified (Petters House, West Somerset, C Block, County Hall)
- The early opportunities identified have formed Phase One of the property rationalisation programme and are being managed as individual projects
- Phase One will also include a One Public Estate (OPE) shared accommodation review working with OPE partners to identify opportunities for joined up property solutions
- Detailed work will be undertaken in all phases of the programme to support evidence-based decision making

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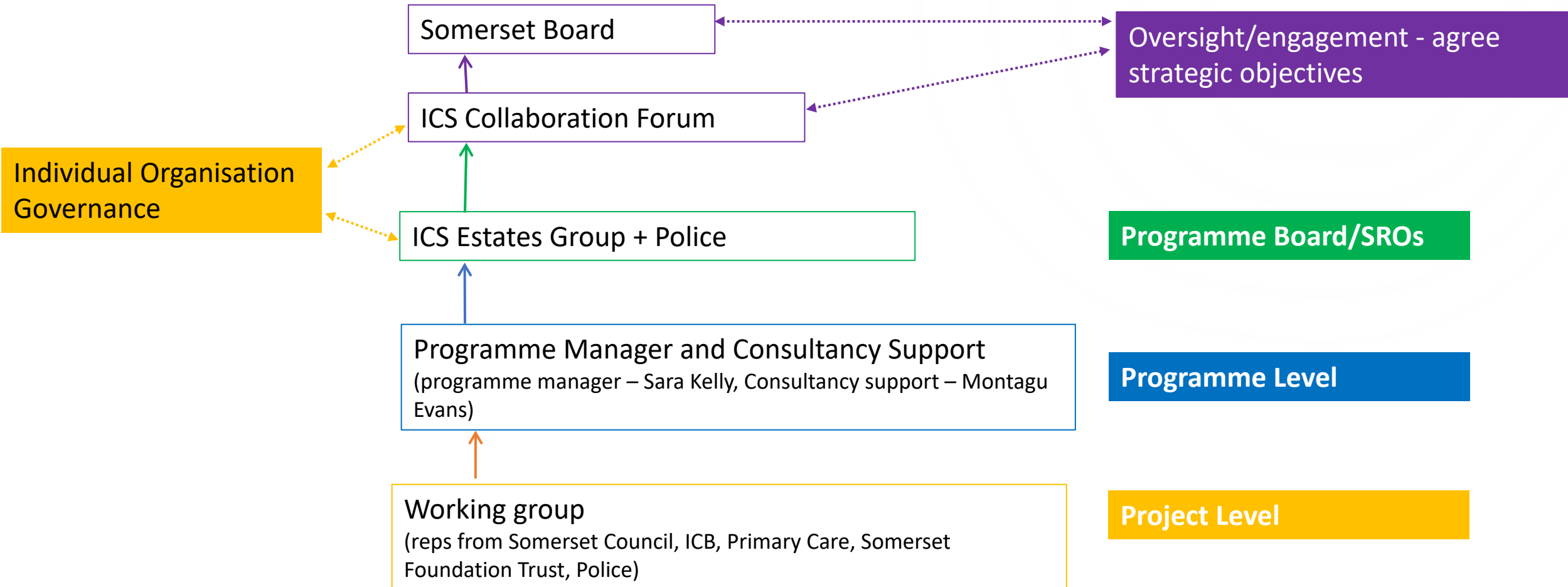
- The Asset Management Strategy and Plan was approved by Full Council in February 2023 and sets out the Council's strategic objectives for property asset management and the approach the Council will take to managing its property assets. The implementation of the strategy will be driven by the Asset Management Group.
- The strategy has 6 objectives to guide policy making and decisions as follows;
 - The Council's estate is financially sustainable, efficient, and effective
 - Assets that are fit for purpose, safe & compliant
 - Assets that address the Climate Emergency.
 - The Council's estate is used meet housing and care needs, with an emphasis on social housing.
 - The Council's estate supports prosperity and economic growth
 - Address the growing challenges in the Council's school buildings estate
- The property rationalisation programme will support delivery of these objectives



Property Rationalisation Governance



OPE Joint Estates Review Governance



Phase One updates



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Petters House/Yeovil Library

- Two buildings within 110 yards of one another
- Developing proposal to relocate customer facing services from Petters House to Yeovil Library to provide a single customer service delivery point in the Town Centre
- Decarbonisation scheme recently completed at Yeovil Library. Petters House has not been decarbonised
- If the feasibility study proves viable, Petters House would be declared surplus (feasibility still underway).
- Detailed engagement has taken place with all services affected
- Space planning consultants appointed and have produced draft designs for consultation

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C Block, County Hall

- Progressing vacation of C Block
- Work being undertaken to understand how C Block could be separated from the remaining campus
- Alder King appointed to assist with marketing options
- Dialogue with interested parties continuing

West Somerset Review

- Somerset Council has 10 sites in Minehead and Williton that are in scope for review
- 3 depot sites in this area will be reviewed as a separate project
- Properties that are considered fully optimised are to be retained as is.
- Seahorse Centre, Minehead – at advanced stages of negotiation to sell this property to Avon and Somerset Police to house an enquiry office and neighbourhood team. There will be a partial lease back to Somerset Council to deliver the satellite site for the LUF funded Somerset Academy for health and social care training
- 4 properties in Williton being considered for rationalisation, 3 of which are on one street
- Two options currently being considered;
 1. Option one – retain West Somerset House (WSH). Declare the Children's Centre, Library and Beckett House surplus and move those services in to WSH
 2. Option two – retain the Children's Centre, Library and Beckett House. Move staff from WSH to alternative locations and declare WSH surplus
- Feasibility study being undertaken to inform decision





Taunton



Williton



Yeovil



Shepton Mallet



Bridgwater



One Public Estate shared accommodation review



- Consultants Montagu Evans appointed to support a strategic review of accommodation to identify opportunities for joined up property solutions
- Launch meeting well attended by representatives from Somerset Council, Integrated Care Board, NHS Foundation Trust, Primary Care, Avon and Somerset Police
- Additional stakeholders identified and will include some central government services and the VCFSE
- In scope properties being identified by all partners and data for each of those properties being gathered
- Focus will largely be non-clinical/non-operational spaces

Questions, Comments and Feedback

