



# Carlisle City Council

## Report to Business & Transformation Scrutiny Panel

### Report details

Meeting Date: 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022  
Portfolio: Finance, Governance & Resources  
Key Decision: Not Applicable  
Policy and Budget Framework: No  
Public / Private: Public

Title: SQUAD WORKING  
Report of: The Deputy Chief Executive  
Report Number: CS 18/22

### Purpose / Summary:

Provide an update on the delivery and use of the Squad working principles and groups within the Council.

### Recommendations:

That members of the panel review the progress made on Squad working and seek any further clarification on the principles and practice

### Tracking

Executive:	N/A
Scrutiny:	21/03/22
Council:	N/A

## 1. Background

1.1. A report highlighting the principles, history and potential benefits of Squad working was presented to this panel in October 2021

1.2. The concept of introducing Squad working was identified within the Council's workforce development plan; to enhance improved agile working and reduce silo working. Also, as a response to feedback from peer group sessions.

1.3. Agile working such as squad working will bring more autonomous and accountable working to employees of the council. A programme of learning, deployment and change in project and working practices has commenced. This report provides members of the Business and Transformation Scrutiny Panel with an update on the progress to date.

1.4. Progress made to date:

- Squad training and development delivered to 32 officers and managers within the Council, representing a range of service areas
- Council project handbook updated to include Squad working principles and methodology
- A list of those people trained in Squad working principles is now available for suitable projects or actions across directorates / service areas
- A small number of projects have been delivered using the Squad principles and benefits have been shared at Management Briefing. See Appendix A for initial feedback. These 'demonstrations' will be used to roll out further uses of the methodology.

### 1.5 Squad Working Definition

Squad working is a relatively new approach to improving services and delivering efficiency in local government. The origins of this management approach can be traced back to methods implemented at Toyota and Fuji during the 1970's and 80's.

The central idea of this approach is to empower squad team members to work on practical solutions to service improvement in timely and efficiency manner. The following provides a brief description of the method and please see Appendix B (infographic on Squad working).

The method revolves around clear roles in a project team of

- Product Owner (who will be responsible for deploying the changed system, service, or solution).
- Squad Coach - who is not a project manager per se, but someone who holds the team's performance and application together, helps remove obstacles to their progress, keeps the accountability for performance within that team and links to the Product Owner to keep them apprised of progress and any adaptations.
- Agile Squad - 7 or less people who are coached into performing using iterative, planned cycles (Sprints) of design and development of a new product, service, or solution. Normally from across multiple teams but not always. Opted into or encouraged to participate in the work

## **2 Proposals**

2.1 Continue to promote the Squad principles and develop more officers in the method of using Squad working.

## **3 Risks**

3.5 A range of risks have been considered in the development of this project management method. The approach to risk management using the discipline of squad working is documented in the Project Managers Handbook.

3.6 Actions have been taken to ensuring that any risks associated with embedding the method itself are mitigated via good communication, training, recording of progress and any challenges. These areas will continue to be monitored.

3.7 To not continue to use Squad working to enable change, improve engagement and opportunity to colleagues would be a waste of expense and time committed to date.

## **4 Consultation**

4.1 Engagement with key stakeholders has been delivered during the initial stages of development. Open sessions have been conducted with our managers and project management staff. An update on progress to date was shared at March Management Briefing with feedback from a short project using Squad principles with internal and external stakeholders.

## **5 Conclusion and reasons for recommendations**

5.5 Early indicators have highlighted the benefits of the Squad approach to working and its contribution to engagement, efficient use of resources and improved energy to deliver.

5.6 The continued development of more officers in the use of Squad working will contribute to skill development across the Council and engagement in projects.

## **6 Contribution to the Carlisle Plan Priorities**

6.1 It is intended that this fresh approach to project management and agile working will assist officers and members to deliver on a range of the Carlisle Plan projects and priorities and ensure a more efficient use of resources within the Council.

### **Contact details:**

Contact Officer:

Ext:

### **Appendices attached to report:**

- A - Overview of feedback received from learning and Squad use
- B - Infographic on Squad working

Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government Act 1972 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers:

- None

### **Corporate Implications:**

Legal -

Property Services -

Finance -

Equality -

Information Governance-

## Squad feedback from Evaluation following development and one project completed.



Have you used squad working since completing the champions training?

- Kanban Board for prioritising workloads/work streams.
- Using it to develop a project with Partnership Manager.
- We are using it to progress what has been a slow moving funding bid. the bid is part of a cross-sector partnership bid so this way of working we are hoping will be ideal to help us define the project clearly, agree tasks and allocate them fairly. We are time bound so the weekly meetings will help us progress.
- Using it with a culture project at Bousteads.
- Used with Dream Placement Students looking at Workplace Wellbeing.

# Do you have plans to use squad working practice in the near future?

## Some comments received.

- Yes - trying to incorporate it into all aspects when working in groups/teams.
- I aimed to introduce it to our team and see if it helped solve any problems from a fresh outlook.
- Yes - thinking of using it to develop a potential funded project.
- It's something to consider using in the future, as it will help streamline projects to ensure the right individuals are recruited
- to the squad to allow for faster development, risk reduction etc through the project.
- yes please
- Yes, when the next project comes up
- Yes - review of homeworking/agile working risk assessment and plan to use within HR team for police reviews etc

Please add any other constructive comments / suggestions you feel you would like to make.

- I can see the value of working in this way as it breaks down tasks into manageable chunks and keeps everyone focused on moving the project forward. There are some tools within the process that I think will prove more useful to me than others.
- Excellent training that has real scope to improve the way that teams across the council can be formed.
- Squad working seems like a really useful tool to help create a better and more sufficient work environment.
- We are limited by the tools we are allowed to use. I am worried that the whiteboard we are using is clunky and hard to view and may put off participants. It may be difficult to bring the methodology to life for people who haven't taken part in the training.
- Some handy tips on the training that I plan to use in future.
- Excited to be part of a squad



# Completed project

Partnership Manager – overall effective to move stale funding project forward.

Feedback:

- Improved shared responsibility
- Improved pace of getting things done
- Improved collaboration
- Allowed the project owner to step back which was beneficial.
- Draw back when other external partners do not have the same software but overcome during the delivery

# Being part of a Squad - how does it work?

