

Council – 27 February 2020

Report of Councillor B Chattha: Portfolio Holder, Agenda for Personnel and Business Support

1 Introduction

This Portfolio report provides me with the opportunity to thank all staff most sincerely for their commitment and efforts over the past 12 months.

Since the last Portfolio report, the Walsall PROUD programme has commenced and staff have been working hard to ensure that this ambitious programme will be a success.

2 Report Detail

The services covered by the Portfolio are listed below:

- Human Resources
- Equalities
- Facilities Management
- Catering, Cleaning & Caretaking Services
- School Crossing Patrol Wardens
- Town Hall Events
- Information Governance
- Corporate Assurance
- Print & Design
- Procurement

These services are often invisible and go unnoticed but are important to us all.

3 Human Resources

The Council has a team that continues to provide a highly professional, wide ranging and customer focused service in order to ensure that the Council's workforce agenda, as set out in its Corporate Plan and as emerging through the Walsall Proud Programme, are achieved through the provision of knowledge, expertise and support.

Significant support has been given to the Chief Executive and Executive Directors on the New Ways of Working – aligning Senior Management Responsibilities including consultation to establish a strengthened senior officer management structure at Tiers 2 and 3. The new structure is expected to be implemented on 1 April 2020.

There has been successful recruitment to a number of senior permanent and interim positions.

Work is also well advanced with corporate and school stakeholders for changes in Employment Law that come into effect on 6 April 2020 in relation to new requirements for written statement of particulars (contracts of employment). This includes ensuring that employees and workers are provided with their written statement on or before their first day of employment.

During 2019, our Apprenticeship Programme was awarded Corner Stone Employer status by the Black Country Careers Hub for our commitment to helping young people reach their full potential, promoting social mobility and supporting equal opportunities for all. Our Apprenticeship Programme continues to go from strength to strength with currently 394 staff (Corporate – 226, Schools – 168) accessing our Apprenticeship Levy, spent on improving the skills / qualifications of the workforce, ensuring they are fit for the future.

During the summer of 2019, a sample qualitative review of the APC (Appraisal) Process was conducted which confirmed it had been well received by employees and managers alike.

The first cohort of managers have 'graduated' from our Proud Manager Programme. Cohort 2 is half way through and there is a waiting list for Cohort 3. The Programme has been endorsed by the Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM), a member of the City & Guilds group.

We continue to roll out our coaching culture, we now have 45 individuals within the coaching network and 3 individuals about to commence the Level 5 in coaching skills qualification.

We have launched the Mental Health First Aider Scheme. 40 individuals are now engaged in providing mental health support to employees experiencing a mental health episode.

A number of contracts continue to be effectively managed by HR on behalf of the Council. These include Starting Point Recruitment (Agency); Occupational Health; Employee Assistance Program; Physiotherapy; HR / Payroll software system (iTrent).

A tendering process for Executive Recruitment both Interim and Permanent has been conducted with contracts to be awarded during February 2020.

The launch of and initial alcohol and drugs testing sessions have continued to be well received by managers and employees. The programme of random testing will now continue on an ongoing basis with the option for managers to be able to request one-off testing of individuals in cases of cause and suspicion.

Several policies have been revised and formally launched with more planned for implementation by March 2020.

The Council has met its statutory obligations through the production of a Council Pay Policy, Gender Pay Gap Report, Transparency Report and Employment Monitoring Report.

We have continued the development of a productive relationship with the trade unions, built on trust, openness and active engagement.

The Council's Annual Health & Safety Report was approved with an underlying message being that health & safety is well managed, with systems and controls in place which are regularly audited for reassurance and to identify areas for improvement.

We are also committed to continuous improvement and the report identifies a number of initiatives to that end.

HR remains a key contributor to the various work streams of the PROUD programme with levels of engagement significantly increased as some of the work streams prepare to undertake major service redesigns.

The Culture & Behaviours workstream has been of particular focus to ensure that it aligns with our New Ways of Working. This has included developmental work to implement Walsall Integrated Skills Project (WISP) for implementation during 2020 which is being designed to identify and better utilise talent within the organisation.

Work is underway on the annual staff recognition awards which provides an opportunity to recognise the contribution and achievement of staff and teams. Previous years have resulted in over 100 nominations being received and at least the same is anticipated this year.

Extensive work and commitment has taken place in the development of the Council's new integrated HR / Payroll and Finance system due for launch July 2020. Processes will be streamlined; accountability made clearer and performance management improved.

4 Corporate Equality

The Equality team provide an advisory service to ensure the Council's compliance with the Equality Act and related legislation. This service coordinates Corporate Equality Group meetings and agendas with the Chief Executive's office, and engages with Trade Unions and Equality Champions. As part of this role, the team publicises the Council's achievements under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) and oversees the implementation of the Equalities Protocol.

Regarding the Public Sector Equality Duty, the team has set equality objectives based on available equalities information, through research, consultation and engagement and equality impact assessments. They help identify internal and external targets that will enable us to improve the collection of equality information, and address the most persistent areas of inequalities faced by both employees and customers. The Duty must be published annually by 31 January.

The Equality and Diversity team have promoted inclusion through corporate training, which was reviewed in 2018/2019. The training offer now includes a number of different methods of learning, from online e-learning modules focused on

legal knowledge and management application of equality and diversity to practical courses, where tools are used in a group environment to raise awareness and tackle potential bias or prejudice. This has been a very popular approach to learning, using personal experience as a starting point to equitable delivery to customers.

Since September 2019, the service has supported the Council's Learning and Development Team in providing new Unconscious Bias and Inter-Cultural training, both of which are aimed at managers and frontline staff. The training looks to provide delegates with different perspectives on diversity and equality, as well as an appreciation of their own personal experiences and biases.

The Equality and Diversity team is also represented at the Walsall Disability Forum and West Midlands Local Authority Equality Network. In both cases, the network meets quarterly to discuss the current landscape around equality (and disability specifically with the latter Group) and identifies how organisations and individuals can work together to provide solution based approaches to the challenges facing the sector.

The Council has a legal obligation under the Equality Act to provide accessible communication and make reasonable adjustments so people can access its services. As a result, the Equality and Diversity team is responsible for managing and monitoring the Interpretation, Translation, Transcription and Easy Read (ITTE) Contract, which is currently in its final year.

Walsall for All

The Walsall for All team organised sessions to celebrate Black History Month in October 2019. The sessions were well received and attended by 60 members of staff from a variety of departments within the Council. We hope to build on this success in this year's Black History Month celebrations.

We are also working with a photographer on a photo project to capture the diverse faces of the Women of Walsall. These photos will be compiled into a short film which will be showcased at an International Women's Day event in March. To date, we have taken photos of around 90 women and there was an opportunity for council staff to take part in the project.

5 Hard FM (Repairs and Compliance)

This is the second year of our current contracts for repairs and maintenance. The number of local suppliers / locally employed staff has grown and this trend is expected to continue.

The procurement exercise for the new corporate gas and electricity contracts has been completed. Consultus Group Ltd have been employed to act as the Council's Energy Brokerage and Bureau service provider. Included in this is the use of their compliant framework to purchase the utilities. This contract commences on 1 April 2020.

Projects which have been completed this year include the new air conditioning and generator and uninterrupted power supplies for the Civic Centre data centre. This now gives the council protection from power cuts and power fluctuations.

6 Cleaning, Caretaking and Catering (Traded)

Our catering, cleaning and caretaking operations are constantly improving, offering better value for money for our customers whether for the Council or for schools. As a result, we have continued to re-secure contracts from schools that had in the past gone to other providers. We continue to seek new profitable business from Walsall schools.

Following the award of the Bronze Food for Life standard in the summer, the team is working with colleagues in Public Health and local suppliers towards the Silver award.

7 School Crossing Patrol Wardens

Professionalism is absolutely critical to a successful school crossing patrol service. Our School Crossing Patrol Wardens go out in all weathers and professionally stop the traffic for people to cross roads in safety. We currently operate school crossing patrols throughout the borough.

8 Information Governance

The Council must remain compliant with regards to its duties and obligations under the Data Protection Regulations. To ensure our compliance going forward, the Information Governance team are working closely with all service areas, leads and third parties to ensure that these obligations can be met. The team continue to provide expert advice and guidance in relation to data sharing agreements, contracts, data breaches and all data processing activities.

A revised Information Governance Framework is being drafted for 2020 to include the move to Office 365 and to reflect other technological changes being implemented as part of the Walsall Proud Programme. This provides further assurance around the application of appropriate organisational and technical controls and will align itself to the updated guidance and procedures such as the user acceptance policy and email retention requirements.

The team have also applied a stretch target to this year's mandatory training compliance requirement which has ensured the Council will achieve the 95% requirement for all staff to be trained two months ahead of the deadline.

9 Corporate Assurance

The Corporate Assurance Team continue to focus on compliance with statutory timescales for responding to all requests for information and complaints whilst implementing an updated version of the team's case management system. This update has improved workflow management, monitoring and reporting for both

complaints and information requests. The next phase of implementation is to develop its use in management of data breaches.

As well as updating the case management system, there has also been investment in the team itself, with five team members completing their BCS Practitioner Certificate in Freedom of Information training, becoming qualified practitioners.

With the Assurance Service fully resourced in regards to Complaints and Information Rights, the team is will now undertake a review Records Management across the organisation in order provide assurance to residents, customers and senior leadership that Council records in all formats are held safely, securely and in compliance with relevant legislation.

It is planned that this work will lead to the development of a range of tools, training and other resources to allow services to achieve universal good records management practice and the council to retain oversight of all aspects of its records management performance.

10 Print and Design

Print and design has maintained a greater capacity for design following the successful apprenticeships of two new members of staff.

The service team has continued to develop the service it offers to customers through learning about the latest print techniques as well as replacing old equipment with new. The team continues to work with ICT and Money Home Job to implement Planet Press, a replacement for LaserServe, which is the Council's biggest software package used for displaying data in a clear and intelligible way to its customers. The team have also implemented Digital Store Front to make it as easy as possible for customers to place orders with the team through self-service and to extend the team's current approach to income generation. Whilst implementing these service improvements, the team have continued to support services across the Council, for example, producing documentation for Election Services last year.

11 Procurement

The Procurement team continue to provide effective and efficient specialist procurement support to ensure that the council's underpinning contracts are procured in a compliant manner and that value for money is achieved across the council's business.

During the financial year 2019/20 the Procurement Service supported the Proud Programme Workstream to enable reductions in Third Party Spend and has successfully delivered 84 active procurement projects, with an annual value of around £34m to enable provision of services to Walsall residents. Social Value and Localism Contribution is key to all contracts and these have been particularly successful in the following contracts:

Interpretation, Translation, Transcription and Easy Read – the successful bidder will, through partnership working, work to support individuals with disabilities into the workplace and support local schools via career fairs as well as work experience opportunities for Walsall care leavers. They will also support community projects and cultural events for people with learning difficulties.

Disability Hub – contract with an organisation from the West Midlands and service user volunteers are supported by 50% cost contribution from the supplier.

Registration, Information and Liaison Services – contract has been awarded to a Walsall based supplier.

Residential and Nursing Block Beds Contract – contract has been awarded to a Walsall based supplier.

Provision of Passenger Transport – contracts with SME's across the West Midlands to enable the support of vulnerable children and adults in the community.

Environmental Enforcement Services – will provide educational resources for use in all schools across the Walsall borough and provide donations and support for the Environmental Volunteer Award. The company will be working closely with the local job centres and will organise recruitment drives.

Councillor B Chattha
Portfolio Holder for Personnel and Business Support

19 February 2020