

Council – 28th February 2019

Report of Councillor A Harris: 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 we have had a Peer Review, a Staff Survey and a refreshed Corporate Plan to help us move forward as an organisation to provide services for the people of Walsall that we can all be proud of.

2 Report Detail

The services covered by the Portfolio are listed below:

- Information Governance
- Complaints
- Print & Design
- Human Resources
- Equalities
- Facilities Mangement
- Catering, Cleaning & Caretaking Services
- Town Hall Events
- Procurement

These services are often invisible and go un-noticed, but they are becoming increasingly important to us all.

3 Information, Communications and Technologies

It is important that the Council remains compliant with regards to our duties and obligations under the Data Protection Regulations, and relevant legal requirements. After gaining substantial assurance through external audit the Information Governance Team are operating a work plan that aligns itself to the requirements for Privacy by Design and Default to ensure we strengthen the use and security of Council data as a whole.

Cabinet has approved a revised Information Governance Framework, this will ensure compliance status for the collection and use of social care data.

It is important that our staff are trained on Information Governance and the Council is well on its way to achieving 95% compliance by the end of the financial year.

4 Corporate Assurance and Information Governance

Cabinet has reviewed the performance management framework. Additional measures on sickness and mandatory training for employees have been included based on the recommendations from Audit Committee.

We are currently piloting a more visual representation of performance reporting of the measures that are monitored in relation to our corporate priorities and have plans to publish this in the near future.

Despite the introduction of General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and the anticipated spike in subject access requests, the service has continued to be able to meet demand and steadily continue to improve compliance with the timescales for providing requested information and managing customer expectations. Whilst this is still a focus of activity, improvements have also been made in our compliance in responding to Freedom of Information requests, even though the volume of requests received remains high.

5 Print and Design

The service has continued to develop capacity to complete work in-house and continues to deliver the most cost effective option for all services. Plans are progressing to implement a “digital store front” which will enable customers of the service to build certain print items in the system before submitting them to print.

6 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 associated Workforce Strategy, are achieved through the provision of knowledge, expertise and support.

The following are highlights of the year’s activity:

The refresh and launch of the Council’s Corporate Workforce Strategy 2018/21, which includes the Council’s behavioural framework; the key findings from the latest employee survey; the key tasks to be undertaken and expected benefits.

Development and launch of the Council’s first Health and Wellbeing at Work Offer. This recognises that the health and wellbeing of our employees is important and commits the Council to providing a supportive workplace culture where healthy lifestyle choices are valued, encouraged and made easier. An example of this has been the establishment of a number of Mental Health First Aiders.

The awarding of a new contract for a managed service provider to meet the Council’s agency staffing provision from 1 April 2019 onwards. This contract is to include a clear demonstration of its social value contribution through its delivery.

We will shortly be going to the market for the provision of an Alcohol and Drugs Testing service for staff for implementation during 2019/20.

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

The Council's management development programme has been refreshed and will be implemented on 1st April 2019. This was recently accredited by the Institute of Learning Management.

A new appraisal scheme called Annual Performance Conversation (APC) has also been launched. Apart from reviewing and setting objectives for the year ahead, new areas of focus include checking how employees are; assessing how the Council's behaviours and values are being demonstrated and for managers/leaders an assessment against the expectations of a Walsall Manager/Leader. All such APC's to be completed each year for all staff by the end of March with a 6 monthly review to be undertaken in September.

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

The Council's apprenticeship programme goes from strength to strength with 302 people, both new starters and existing staff, now on apprenticeships and accessing the levy. A number of these opportunities have taken account of the Council's role as a corporate parent with 10 confirmed appointments at the time of writing this report. Regionally, this programme is recognised as best practise and has recently been put forward for the Municipal Journal National Awards 2019.

Key focus for the team is the implementation of the 2nd year of the national pay award, including the development of a collective agreement with the unions hopefully for implementation from 1st April 2019.

We will continue paying the voluntary Living Wage for 2019/20.

The Council continues to support the local community through its work placements scheme offered to young people across the Borough and its commitment to providing placements within the Council to people with disabilities, via its Recruitability scheme. Currently there are 8 such placements. One of the current participants was homeless 12-18 months ago. Since then the individual has been supported by Walsall Council in finding a home, has been appointed to a Recruit-Ability placement and is doing so well in the placement that there may be a chance of the individual securing employment at the end of the placement. From last year's scheme, 4 appointments were made.

In the next year we will be looking to ensure continued full utilisation of the Apprenticeship Levy to provide new opportunities in the council and the development of existing staff.

The continued expansion of the Council's coaching programme as a way of increasing individual and organisational performance and increasing personal awareness and lasting change.

7 Facilities Management (FM)

Overview – To provide a responsive professional management of the Council's facilities that can be utilised for the benefit of the residents of Walsall.

Facilities Management consists of the following services (of which the first three are traded services):

- Cleaning and Catering
- Property Services
- School crossing patrols

Our work cuts across the whole Council and whilst we have a range of staff at all levels the one thing that cuts across all of the teams is the professionalism and commitment of all of these teams. This professional attitude of the teams whether it is food hygiene matters or major construction projects has to be at the highest level. It is this professional attitude matched to a commercial focus which will continue the development of the service.

Buildings

April 2018 marked a change in the service delivery for the repair, maintenance and compliance works, this is now delivered by newly procured supply chain. Each discipline has its own specialist contractor which has improved service levels received. The facilities maintenance team manage each of these contractors monitoring cost, quality and compliance, from a financial point we are now achieving more work for each pound spent.

The utilities contracts are being reviewed and a 12 month temporary contract has been agreed, this will allow for a complete independent review to be undertaken to form a new energy strategy, this will identify the best options for purchasing and managing the energy contracts moving forward.

The ongoing improvements within the corporate building have led to contracts being awarded for the replacing the air conditioning and installation of a new emergency power back up system in the ICT suite. 2 major projects which have been designed and due to go to tender in the next financial year include the replacement of Civic centre heating and ventilation, and rewire of the council house.

Cleaning and Catering

I want to start with something that we take for granted. The Bistro in the Civic Centre is proving to be a profitable success story. We had two facilities in the Civic complex. A loss making Town Hall restaurant which was once a popular venue but had fallen into difficulties. We also had a loss making Bistro which provided food prepared in the Town Hall restaurant. There has been a transformation and with no compulsory

redundancies we now have a profitable bistro and the Town Hall restaurant is closed. We have turned the civic catering facility around securing jobs for the long term and providing a valuable service to our staff. The Town Hall restaurant was not bad, it had just “had its time”.

Our catering, cleaning and caretaking operations are constantly improving offering improved value for money for our customers whether for the Council or for schools as a result we have started to re-secure contracts from schools that had in the past gone to other providers.

School Crossing Patrols

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 Procurement

The Procurement Team 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.

Through the provision of procurement knowledge, expertise and support, the Procurement Service continues to support service areas in enabling the delivery of the Council’s strategic objectives.

Procurement activities minimise procurement/contract related risk, improve procurement/contractual compliance and governance, reduce procurement-related waste, maximise value and enable sustainable savings across the Council.

Councillor A Harris

Portfolio Holder for Agenda for Personnel and Business Support

20 February 2019