

Council – 28th February 2018

Report of Councillor K Chambers: Portfolio Holder, Agenda for Change and 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, Communications and Technologies (ICT) covering ICT, Corporate Assurance and Information Governance
- Procurement
- Human Resources
- Facilities Management
- Business Change

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

3 Information, Communications and Technologies

Overview: To provide a resilient 'fit for purpose' service that fully meets the organisation's needs going forward.

ICT has lacked investment for a number of years. With the development of an ICT Strategy to support a refreshed Corporate Plan it is evident that our current technology infrastructure is unable to adapt and grow to support the transformation agenda. Moreover, as most council services rely on ICT to deliver and maintain their IT systems, the aging infrastructure is growing more unreliable and prone to failing.

A business case has been developed to mitigate the risks identified and to support the transformation work streams. Migration of systems from our on premise data centre into a safe and secure UK based hosted centre is planned as a key priority this year. In tandem with this Cloud migration, a new system is being procured to replace our current Human Resources and Finance systems into one single combined solution.

Over the past 9 months over 500 mobile tablet devices have been deployed across the council, 400 of which were deployed to social workers in Children's Services and Adult Social Care. This is having a significant impact on the way social workers operate, negating the need to take files out with them and the ability to update records electronically as soon as they have met with their clients.

New contracts awarded last year are being rolled out covering the council wide broadband network (BT) and also our mobile airtime contract (Vodafone). Both contracts will realise financial savings for the council.

The Council's new web site was launched in September; built on a modern, robust, secure, flexible platform which will provide the foundation to build digital transformation on supporting the transformation programme's aspiration to offer digital customer services.

Future Plans

£6m of new funding for ICT is requested for 2018/19 and 2019/20. To govern and deliver this ambitious change programme, 23 new posts have been created. ICT has successfully created opportunities for 11 of its existing staff to become apprentices and to access training and education opportunities, again to prepare ICT for the future technology transformation.

2018/19 will see the replacement of over 1000 Wyse terminal devices which have reached their end of life. This gives the opportunity to replace the devices with more flexible and mobile solutions and together with the migration to cloud based Microsoft Office will allow our staff to be truly agile in their working arrangements.

4 Corporate Assurance and Information Governance

Overview – to ensure that the organisation is fully compliant with regards to statutory and governance requirements, including the General Data Protection Regulations coming into force in May this year.

Cabinet and Executive Directors have worked with Corporate Assurance to develop a new four-year Corporate Plan with a vision, priorities and clear unambiguous performance measures. We will focus on developing a robust performance management framework fully integrated with the corporate plan vision and priorities with transparent reporting of the council's performance against its priorities.

The introduction of the new General Data Protection Regulations will require renewed focus on our systems and the information we are custodians for. This means ensuring we retain only the information we are legally required to hold and that we are open and transparent with our customers when they request to see what we hold about them. A project is underway to monitor our preparations for compliance with this new legislation which will affect all of our services and the way our staff work.

5 Procurement

Overview – To help deliver a robust, innovative compliant and efficient procurement and contract management process, enabling the Council to maximise financial and social value from its contracts for our residents.

Procurement Opportunities and Challenges

Through the provision of procurement knowledge, expertise and support, the procurement service has continued to support and enable delivery of the council's strategic objectives and lead activity that seeks to minimise risk, improve compliance and governance, reduce procurement-related waste and maximise value and enable sustainable savings.

There are many opportunities to maximise procurement-driven benefits in a challenging environment. As the value and benefit of Procurement are increasingly realised, the demand for procurement support continues to grow. Additional resources have been made available in year to address some of the demand challenges, however recruitment remains an ongoing challenge due to in industry wide shortages of suitably qualified and experienced staff. Continued improvements to procurement systems, processes and documentation have however helped to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of procurement activity against a backdrop of shrinking resources.

Procurement Achievements 2017/18

During the financial year 17/18 the Procurement Service has successfully delivered a total of 150 procurement projects across all directorates of the council with an annual value of around £74m.

Highlights of some key achievements are summarised below:

- Achieved annual cost reductions of Circa £914k, as a result of procurement 2017/18 procurement activity
- Retender and award of new contract for Healthy Eating in Schools
This achieved a cashable efficiency of circa £122k, avoided future cost increases and established an improved service.
- Retender and award of contract for 0-19 Early Help Locality Children's Model
This will achieve a cashable efficiency of circa 69k from 2020/21, has generated employment and volunteering social value benefits and has enabled the Council to continue providing services within a reduced budget
- Retender and award of new contract for Direct Payment Support Services
This has achieved an annual cashable efficiency of circa £39k, protected the Council from uncontrolled future price increases and generated social value benefits by Working with the local community to encourage recruitment from within the Walsall area.

- Retender and award of new contracts for Passenger Transport Services
This has achieved annual cost reductions of circa £216k, has established improved service provision and generated the following social value benefits: inclusive economic opportunity for local business, sustainable employment for local people, and reduction in Co2 emissions.

Future Procurement Plans

Much has been achieved over the last 12 months, however in order to continue supporting delivery of council objectives and priorities and tackle some of the existing challenges, within the constraints of current resources, a range of procurement strategies are being deployed, a summary of which is set out below:

- Maximise local supply chain opportunities – Maximise opportunities for local suppliers to do business with the council.
- Social value – Maximise and drive social value out of commissioning and procurement through implementation of revised Social Value Policy and Toolkit practice.
- Supplier and contract rationalisation – Maximise value for money and delivery of cashable and non-cashable efficiencies through the provision of procurement knowledge, expertise and support. Strategically manage supply, rationalise the supply chain and number of contracts across the council. This will reduce waste, maximise purchasing power and generate efficiencies.
- Procurement governance – Create a procurement board and ensure compliance throughout the organisation delivering improved value for money and efficiencies.
- Procurement strategy – Implement a procurement strategy that seeks to transform the council's approach to procurement, creating a modern and effective service.

6 Human Resources

Overview- to have 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 services are provided by the service:

- HR Business Partnering to senior management teams
- Learning & Development services including the commissioning, development and delivery of training courses and material to staff, manager, elected members and external customers.

- Workforce policy and procedure development and implementation
- Production and analysis of workforce information
- Health & Safety services
- Operational support and guidance in relation to re-structures; TUPE transfers; attendance, performance and conduct casework
- Recruitment and selection activity including advertising; shortlisting; running of assessment centres; Disclosure & Barring Service; contract paperwork
- Delivery of traded services to schools covering consultancy services; recruitment; DBS and Health & Safety.

The following are highlights of the year's activity:

The development and launch of the Council's first Corporate Workforce Strategy for a number of years.

The awarding of new contracts for Occupational Health; Physio and an Employee Assistance Programme designed to support and enable staff to remain or return to work and be effective as soon as possible.

Met our statutory obligations through the production of a Council Pay Policy, Gender Pay Gap Report, Transparency Report and Employment Monitoring Report

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

Held an Employee Survey for the first time in 10 years which resulted in just under half of the workforce participating from which an action plan will be developed and the Corporate Workforce Strategy refreshed.

The launch of the Council's apprenticeship programme where as at today's date we have 134 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 confirmed corporate parent with 4 confirmed appointments and more imminent.

Obtained the necessary approval to continue paying the voluntary Living Wage for 2018/19.

Running of a Staff Recognition Awards initiative for the first time in a number of years to recognise the efforts of an employee or team that has consistently provided excellent customer service, achieved great things, gone that extra mile to help others or is proud to work for Walsall Council.

Embedded the implementation of the revised terms and conditions of employment from 1st April 2017 with savings of £2m towards the council's financial challenges.

Through its traded service arm has brought in income in excess of £850K for 2017/18.

Continuing to work closely with Finance and Procurement colleagues in the procurement of an integrated HR/Finance/Payroll and Procurement i-cloud solution to ensure value for money and appropriateness of a system delivering a modern, effective and efficient service. Contract anticipated to be awarded March 2018 and implementation of the HR and Payroll aspects by April 2019.

Leading role in ensuring the effective recruitment of senior recruitment into the Council through the appointment of a new Chief Executive and Executive Director Children Services in a challenging climate alongside the current running of a process for the post of Executive Director Resources & Transformation.

Leading role in the development and delivery of a comprehensive elected member training programme.

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. This has resulted this year in 3 of the 6 placements being offered permanent positions, 2 inside and 1 outside of the Council.

Future HR challenges

Refresh of the Council's Workforce Strategy to take account the findings of the Employee Survey and recent Peer Review.

The configuration, testing and implementation of the new procured integrated HR/Finance/Payroll and Procurement i-cloud solution.

To ensure that how employee data is stored and used across the Council meets its obligations under the new General Data Protection Regulations.

To ensure full utilisation of the Apprenticeship Levy to provide new opportunities in the council and the development of existing staff.

As recognised as part of the Peer Review the expansion of the Council's coaching programme as a way of increasing individual and organisational performance and increasing personal awareness and lasting change.

Expansion of the Council's programme support in relation to Mental Health at Work including the establishment of Mental Health First Aiders.

Working with the unions to find a workable solution to the fair allocation of the available corporate facility time budget.

Continue to modernise its employment framework, providing legally compliant, clear and easy-to- use policies, procedures and safety management standards.

Continue its traded services to schools, selling recruitment, health and safety and HR consultancy support to schools, both inside and outside the borough.

Continued focus on the Council's obligations under the public sector equalities duty recognising that more needs to be done in this area to ensure that the profile of the workforce better reflects the communities which it serves.

Continuing to ensure that staff have the opportunity to develop their skills in line with the needs of the council with a particular focus on leadership and behavioural and management competencies.

To ensure that the role of HR in the Council continues to be recognised and appreciated based on the quality and relevance of its delivery with a structure and knowledge/skill base to meet the challenges stated above.

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):

- Building Cleaning
- 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

The major projects that I want to bring to your attention in this report cover both civic pride and service delivery.

The night shelter – delivered in record time and on budget providing a safe and supportive place for some of our most vulnerable to sleep.

The cenotaph (Bradford Place) – national grant money was secured to carry out a restoration of the cenotaph and the works that were completed in 2017 have returned it to something we can be proud of again.

Demolition of the Bonser building – Required complex negotiations and planning due to its strategic location adjacent to both the ring road (A4148) and the railway line.

The council until the end of March 2018 has been using a framework developed and managed by Solihull Council. Extensive work has been undertaken in 2017 and this year to identify new compliant frameworks and procurement routes to secure a seamless transition to new providers for building works and related services.

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. To stand in the middle of the road is not the easiest thing to do. 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.

Supported by nothing more than a large sign, a coat and a hat, school crossing patrol wardens go out into the middle of often very busy roads and halt the traffic. We continue to provide this non-statutory, discretionary service across many sites in the borough.

8 Business Change

Overview – To provide the capacity to bring about change to working practices that will benefit the residents of Walsall.

Over the last year we have worked hard to develop a range of themes around what we may look to change about the Council, and have run a series of engagement events with officers and members. We have introduced the Transformation Fund with a bidding process, and begun to shape the governance around the programme. Our peer review was positive about these steps we’ve taken, but have encouraged us to move forward with ambition and pace set within the context of the Council’s strategic priorities.

In addition we have established the Transformation Team who will support the organisation to drive this change. It is important we have the right resources in place to do this, and a dedicated team specialising in project and programme management will support services to drive business change. This team is currently focussed on building the governance around the programme, ensuring we follow best practice around project planning and change management, as well as supporting service areas with their work.

Future Plans

We are currently in the process of procuring a partner to embark on a 'stocktake' of our services, spend and how we work. This will provide us with an evidence base for change, as well as a benchmark so we can measure our success. We will also compare ourselves with other organisations to learn from other's transformation journeys.

As this work develops, we will challenge our current programme, to ensure we are focussing our energies and targeting our resources in the most effective way possible. We may re-shape or re-prioritise the programme we are currently working on, to really target our transformation resources around what makes the biggest impact to our customers and service delivery.

Councillor K Chambers

Portfolio Holder for Agenda for Change & Personnel and Business Support

23 February 2018