
OVERVIEW OF EFFICIENCY AND RESOURCES PORTFOLIO

1. Since the last meeting of Council, the following are the main areas of work under my Efficiency and Resources Portfolio.

Care First Social Care IT System

2. Cabinet has agreed to replace the Council's current IT Social Care IT System, Care First, and has given approval to Officers to initiate a procurement exercise for its replacement.
3. Care First was introduced within the Authority in 2004 and is used to manage the business processes around adults and children's social care, however, concerns about its usability have been growing for some time, and, following an in-depth review to ascertain whether it was still fit for purpose, we were advised that the most effective way forward to support the change required to deliver the savings within the Medium-Term Financial Plan and the new ways of working within the Council's change programme, and to support the on-going management and delivery of children's and adults social care from a technology point of view, was to replace the system at an estimated cost of £1.67 million.
4. Cabinet therefore agreed to release £933,000 capital funding and to carry forward the invest to save contingency balance, anticipated to be £63,000 to 2015/16 to contribute to the year two contingency costs and declared the project as a non-strategic procurement on the Annual Procurement Plan.

Procurement Plan – Update

5. In accordance with Contract Procedure Rules, Cabinet has considered the Procurement Plan and determined, again, in accordance with criteria, which contracts for the forthcoming year shall be delegated to the Officers and which are deemed to be strategic. Subsequent contracts will necessitate a revised Plan being brought to Cabinet.

Regulation of Investigatory Powers -

6. Cabinet has received an update on developments in relation to the use of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000, which enables Council's to carry out certain types of surveillance activity, as long as specified procedures are followed, and that any information obtained as a result of surveillance activity can be relied upon in Court proceedings provided that the provisions of the Act are complied with.

Complaints, Compliments and Comments Annual Report 2012/13

7. Cabinet has been provided with details of complaints, compliments and comments which have been received by the Council during 2013/14 under the Council's Corporate Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedure and those representations made under the Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care and the Public Health Complaints, Compliments and Comments Procedures.

Organisational changes have been made as a result of complaints received where appropriate.

Apprenticeships

8. There are a number of success stories for Apprentices throughout the Council. As an example, the Neighbourhood Services and Resources Group has been introducing apprentices to a number of areas preparing for succession planning. The recently re-structured Business Support Unit took on seven Business Support Apprentices in November 2013. All of these apprentices have successfully completed Level 2 training over the course of the year and five have gone on to gain either permanent or temporary positions in the Business Support Unit and are looking to continue with Level 3 training. Customer Services recruited two apprentices earlier in the year and one has achieved a permanent position in the Centre.
9. The apprentices have had a positive impact on the workforce and bring an enthusiasm in their approach to work whilst at the same time gaining the skills and knowledge required when working in these demanding areas. It is a rewarding experience for both employer and apprentice to pass on knowledge and watch a young person's confidence grow, opening up new opportunities to them.
10. Based on the recent successes, four more Business Support Apprentices have recently been appointed with the likelihood of further apprenticeship opportunities being made available across other teams based, on the recent successes.

Arrears Collection

11. The Council's Revenues and Benefits service has reported improved collection figures for Council Tax arrears and Housing Benefit overpayments.
12. In the first two quarters of 2014-15, the Council collected over £648k of Council Tax arrears. This compares to £521k for the same period in 2013-14. The recovery of Council Tax arrears is a priority for the Council and additional staffing resources have contributed to an improvement in collection from £388k in 2010-11 to £994k in 2014-15. It is anticipated that Council Tax arrears collection will exceed £1.2 million in 2014-15.
13. In the same period, the Council has also collected over £527k in Housing Benefit overpayments, compared to £403k in 2013-14. Overall recovery has improved from £670k in 2010-11 to £800k in 2013-14 and it is anticipated that Housing

Benefit overpayment recovery will exceed £900k in 2014-15.

Council Tax Support Scheme

14. You will see elsewhere on the agenda for tonight's meeting, that Cabinet is recommending a draft Council Tax Support Scheme for 2015/16 based on the 2014/15 scheme, which was implemented for the annual billing period 2014/15. Following the replacement of the national Council Tax Benefit System with local schemes, Councils are required to publish and set a Council Tax Support Scheme each year and consider whether any changes should be made to the existing scheme. As there have been no significant challenges to the current scheme, Cabinet is recommending that there should be no changes to the 2015/16 scheme.

Freedom of Information, Environmental Information and Subject Access Request Annual Reports 2013/14

15. Cabinet has received an overview of the requests processed by the Council under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 and the subject of access provisions of the Data Protection Act 1988 between 1 April, 2013 and 31 March, 2014. There are a number of key themes and recommendations within the report which, if implemented, will improve access to information and reduce the number of requests the Council is required to process.

Project Position Statement and Capital Programme Monitoring Quarter Two 2014/15

16. Cabinet has received information on the current position of the Council's capital commitments and resource together with all the live construction projects currently being managed by the Council.
17. The Council has a substantial annual construction programme of work, with the current project position statement showing that there are 66 live projects currently being managed with an overall project outturn value of £90.6 million. The majority of the projects are running to time, cost and quality expectations with no foreseeable issues.

Revenue Budget Monitoring 2014/15 – Quarter Two

18. Cabinet has considered the Quarter 2 forecast of the 2014/15 revenue budget outturn. The report indicated projections showing an overall improvement of £2.388 million, of which, £1.392 million relates to balances carried forward from the 2013/14 outturn and £0.964 million relates to the budget rebasing exercise undertaken in Quarter 1.

Sale of Council Land

19. The Council's remaining site at Glebe Road North has recently completed and will see the delivery of 34 No. affordable units by the end of March 2016.

Councillor Stephen Harker
Cabinet Member with Efficiency and Resources Portfolio