

**REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR RESOURCES****COUNCILLOR ANDY KAY****PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING  
DIRECTOR: DENISE PARK****DATE: 7 November 2013****HR & LEGAL****Workforce Reductions 2014/15**

As we continue our planning for 2014/15, budget reductions agreed by Finance Council in March as part of the two year budget strategy will begin to be implemented. Unfortunately it is expected that the number of people 'at risk of redundancy' will again increase. Work has commenced with trades unions and staff to work through what this may mean for employees in those services affected.

Although staff consultation periods (for those facing potential redundancy) have been reduced by the Government, we are making every effort to maximise consultation periods with staff before redundancy notices are issued to try and avoid compulsory redundancies wherever possible.

During this period of change employees are once again focused on delivering services whilst in some cases themselves facing uncertainty about what the changes mean for them. Every effort is being made to progress changes as early as possible to maximise opportunities to support staff and to minimise any detrimental effects on essential services through these difficult times.

**The Blakewater Suite - Register Office**

We have decommissioned the current Register Office Ceremony room and have licensed the room as an "Approved Premise for Civil Marriages and Civil Partnerships" under the Marriages and Civil Partnerships (Approved Premises) Regulations 2005.

From 29 September 2013 the room is now known as the Blakewater Suite and is available for marriages, civil partnerships, naming ceremonies, renewal of vows and private citizenship ceremonies.

The statutory register office room is now the waiting area adjacent to the current ceremony room. Registration Services have ensured that the same high quality service is delivered in smart comfortable surroundings, whether on a smaller scale in the statutory room or in the Blakewater Suite.

Decommissioning the Register Office Ceremony Room frees it from the statutory restrictions and has enabled the service to have greater flexibility to provide additional services for the public.

**IT UPDATE**

IT staff were heavily involved in the project to move more than 400 staff into 10 Duke Street. A dedicated team spent three weeks moving staff into 10 Duke Street and supporting them during the transition, while they settled in

and became used to the new Lync unified communications/telephone system and other new ways of working that have been introduced.

ITM&G are providing advice and procurement support to the Fostering and Adoptions service as they seek to improve the content, quality and visual impact of their internet web presence and attract more carers to these vital services.

As well as the day to day systems management, other major projects that ITM&G are involved in include the implementation of:

- New IT tools for the customer contact centre;
- New waste management functions;
- Internet web forms related to Council Tax and Benefits
- A new Adult Social Care system
- A new Library Management system
- A new HR and Payroll system

With significant upgrades to:

- The leisure management system;
- The environmental services system;
- The planning system;
- The Youth Offending Information System
- The elections system.

All these projects will help the Council deliver efficiencies and/or improved services for citizens and partners.

## **FINANCE UPDATE**

### **Welfare Reform**

A review of the cases affected shows that the number of under occupancy cases has decreased since the legislation was enacted in April when 1,842 properties were affected, however the number has now declined to 1,696 (299 classed as under occupying by 2 or more bedrooms, and 1,397 under occupying by 1 bedroom.

Since the government introduced the Welfare Cap in the borough the benefit system shows 68 families affected by the change at an average cost to them of £70.50 per week.

The Council continues to support those affected by the under occupation and welfare cap legislation by the assessment of applications for Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP's). To date the Council has assessed 717 applications and awarded/committed £186,456, with £190,187 remaining in the fund.