

## **REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR RESOURCES**

**COUNCILLOR ANDY KAY**

**PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING  
EXEC DIRECTOR: DENISE PARK**

**DATE: 16 JULY 2015**

### **Capita Partnership review**

Following the report to Executive Board in June, further work is now underway on the in-house service options for debtors and creditors, revenues and benefits services along with supporting other portfolios with their procurement reviews and future service specification planning. Capita continue to work positively with the Council on transition planning.

### **Audit & Assurance**

The 2014/15 Annual Internal Audit Opinion and Corporate Risk and Resilience Forum Annual Reports were presented and approved by Audit Committee at its meeting on 16 June, along with the draft Annual Governance Statement for 2014/15. The Annual Governance Statement forms part of the Council's 2014/15 published accounts. The Audit Committee also considered and approved its own Audit Committee Annual Report for the first time prior to it being referred to the Executive Board for endorsement.

### **Procurement**

The Council's eSourcing system, The Chest, is now fully operational and is the Council's preferred option for obtaining quotes and tenders from suppliers. We currently have 647 Blackburn and Darwen based suppliers (up 38% compared to this time last year) registered and able to compete for opportunities via the chest with this Council and other north-west authorities.

The Corporate Procurement Team continue to support Departments with their contract procurement requirements and, in particular, are providing advice and support in respect the future service delivery models to be established following the end of the Strategic Partnership with Capita in June 2016. Work is also underway on the project to implement a Council wide purchase card system, which will be more efficient for some goods and services.

### **Welfare Reform**

Following the post-election announcements by the government, the Benefits Service is undertaking preparatory work to assess the number of claimants within the Borough who may be affected by the proposed reduction in the welfare cap from £26,000, and the removal of housing benefit from 18-21 year-olds who are unemployed and claiming Jobseeker's Allowance.

Whilst we await the final clarification of the policy, and the date of introduction, early indications show that a large number of individuals within the Borough will be affected by these changes. Further updates will be provided to Members when the position is clearer.

A plan for the introduction of these changes and possible means of support for those affected will be agreed once full details are released by the government.

The Benefits Service will continue to promote discretionary housing payments for those affected by welfare reform where appropriate, however, it must be noted that the allocation of funds has been reduced by the Department of Work and Pensions over the last 12 months. Further reductions should be anticipated for 2016/17.

### **IT Update**

Work on the library RFID project and the introduction of self service facilities has progressed well with all sites now functioning and the internet booking module also going live. The new Wide Area Network rollout is well underway to update the links to all corporate and schools sites.

A review of the Council's public access IT provision and facilities including wi-fi options at key locations in the borough is underway pending approval of business cases.

### **Registrars**

The new Account Manager for the General Register Office recently wrote to acknowledge receipt of our Annual Performance Report, noting the excellent levels of service achieved by the local authority during the past year. This included our continuously high attainment of key performance targets for appointment availability and customer satisfaction and timeliness of birth and death registrations consistently exceeding national and regional averages.

The High Assurance rating given in the recent Stock and Security Assurance Audit conducted by GRO was mentioned as another success along with the introduction of emailing appointment confirmations and reminder alerts to customers for which we have provided a Good Practice Case summary for the GRO website.

In congratulating us on our excellent service performance and achievements this year the GRO further noted the assurance we provided that GRO requirements for reporting Suspicious Certificate Applications, Suspected Sham Marriages and/or Civil Partnerships and those in respect of Data Protection and the Registration Online System have been adhered to.