

## REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR RESOURCES – 27<sup>th</sup> July 2017

COUNCILLOR ANDY KAY

PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING  
CHIEF OFFICER: DENISE PARK

### **Benefits**

The key performance indicators improved significantly over the financial year 2016/17, with the average processing times for new claims and changes in circumstance coming down to 15-16 days and 2-3 days respectively. A significant part of this improvement has been as a direct result of the move to greater online self-serve by customers. In the next few weeks the final online form will be made available on the web for benefit claimants. This new form will allow all benefit applications from hostels to be made online.

### **Council Tax and Business Rates**

In order to ensure all recovery options are available to the council, an agreement has been reached with a firm of solicitors to assist with bankruptcy proceedings against those companies and individuals for whom all other recovery options have been explored and yet who still have large unpaid arrears. Whilst it is expected that the number of cases will be low, this new development will allow for some accounts who have failed to pay arrears over a long period to be resolved.

### **Customer Services**

Over a number of months the telephone directory has been reviewed and updated to allow the introduction of an automated switchboard. This solution will be deployed over the next 2 months and therefore eliminate the majority of switchboard calls requiring customer service involvement.

### **Audit & Assurance**

The Annual Internal Audit Opinion and the Risk Management and Counter Fraud Reports were considered by the Audit & Governance Committee at their meeting in June; these reports provide assurances around the extent and strength of the processes in place to provide sound internal control and governance arrangements and in turn, inform the 2016/17 Annual Governance Statement for the Council that is required as part of the Annual Statement of Accounts.

### **Financial Services**

The new Financial Management Systems have been live now for over three months and we have just produced the first financial monitoring statements from them with new style reports for budget holders to review. We are continuing with Phase 2 of the project to develop the systems further to deliver efficiencies both within the Finance Team and across the wider Council, including budget setting and year end forecasting.

### **IT**

IT continue to implement new and upgraded systems to delivery efficiencies and service improvements including;

- Phase 2 Finance system
- Public Access solution for Libraries
- Planning System
- Till replacement at KGH and leisure sites
- Phase 2 Revs and Bens digitisation
- Replacement Leisure booking system

### **HR**

The HR service now has 39 SLAs in place for the provision of payroll services, 25 for HR consultancy and 39 for health and safety for schools in the Borough. In addition, an e-learning offer has been made available to all schools.

With the introduction of the apprenticeship levy, there is a key focus on the recruitment of apprentices to roles, as well as linking the development of existing employees to apprenticeships.

Health, safety and well-being continues to be a priority ensuring that the Council is compliant with all health and safety legislation and proactively manages employee attendance. New occupational health provision commenced in April 2017, along with a new employee assistance programme.

### **Coroners Service**

Legal Services are supporting the project to merge 3 Coronial areas in Lancashire-this includes all Coronial areas within the wider County except Blackpool. We are working in close liaison with Lancashire County Council to ensure all relevant procedures are followed and practical steps are taken to facilitate the move and deliver efficiencies.

### **Legal**

During May and June the department delivered this year's regulatory training for elected members on planning and licensing committees as well as training on the member's code of conduct.

### **Corporate Services**

The Democratic and Governance team once again delivered a successful Elections Service for the General Election on 8<sup>th</sup> June 2017. In support of them many staff from across all council services volunteered to work on elections and these were also supplemented by a number of casual employees. All contributed to the success of the process, and maintenance of our excellent record of running efficient and effective elections in this Borough.