

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR RESOURCES – 5th October 2017

COUNCILLOR ANDY KAY

PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING
CHIEF OFFICER: DENISE PARK

Digital

We have revisited and are refreshing the Council's Digital vision, which is underpinned by 4 Digital strategies covering Workforce, Customer, Borough and Partner. In doing so we have established a new Digital Board and a small dedicated Digital Task Team (DTT). The new structure will enable the DTT to co-design digital service roadmaps alongside departmental service area leads to bring together technical knowledge and experience with service understanding. Key to this work is baselining where our services currently stand on the 'digital journey' in order to better understand what can realistically be achieved, and in what timescale, and to provide a mechanism for measuring and managing the change going forward. A report on the Council's Digital Strategy will be submitted to the next Executive Board meeting.

Audit & Assurance

The Audit & Assurance Team reported its progress in delivering the 2017/18 Annual Audit plan to the September Audit & Governance Committee meeting. The report included commentary on the results of investigations into the data matches highlighted in the 2017 National Fraud Initiative (NFI). To date £198k has been identified for recovery e.g. in overpayment of single person discounts or council tax support where claimants have not informed the Council of changes in circumstances, and in respect of blue badges or residential parking permits issued to individuals who are now deceased and which have not been returned.

The team also supported a request from Environment & Leisure to use some of the internal risk management budget, to procure dashboard cameras for the Council's street cleansing vehicles. This initiative will improve our ability to defend insurance claims and should increase drivers' awareness of their driving habits.

Financial Services

The new Financial Management Systems have now been live for five months. Budget Monitoring reports from the new system have been circulated to budget holders and mandatory budget holder training is taking place at the beginning of October to reinforce the e-learning training available on the intranet. 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

ITM&G continue to implement new and upgraded systems to deliver improved services and efficiencies including;

- A Public Access solution has now been deployed to the Libraries
- Planning System- digitisation continues with the mapping of historic planning applications and cleansing of the Land Charges data.
- Tills have been replaced across the King Georges Hall and leisure sites.
- Phase 2 of the Revenues and Benefits digitisation project is underway. E-billing and Landlord portal are live with the remaining modules due to go-live soon
- Replacement of the Leisure booking system is now underway to go live this month

HR & Business Support Services

Children's Services and Resources have agreed to deliver a joint change programme focussing on business and workforce transformation. The main objectives will be to review current work methods, linking into the digital programme to improve systems of working and processes. In addition, we will be focussing on recruitment and retention of employees, in particular social workers. The overall programme intends to take a holistic approach to deliver more efficient and effective services within the budgets available.

Apprentices

HR have been supporting the organisation with recruiting and supporting Apprentices. In addition to our existing Apprentices throughout the council, the new intake has created a further 17 new Apprentice roles. This number may rise over the coming weeks as more apprentice opportunities are identified.

Wellbeing Week

'Wellbeing Week' starts on 23rd October 2017. A number of initiatives will be taking place in the Council including mental health day, restart a heart and informing staff of services available to them with support from the HR Team working in conjunction with The Wellbeing Service, Public Health and Mental Wellbeing Partners.

Corporate Services

From Monday 2nd October 2017 the new Complaints team will start working together, merging the Corporate Complaints and the Adults & Children's Customer Care Teams. They will be dealing with all complaints across the Council including MP enquiries and will be managed by the Head of Governance, who will review the processes/procedures for dealing with complaints and seek to ensure that any lessons learnt facilitates service improvement.

Legal Services

There have been 11 traveller encampments in the borough since May, the majority of which have been on Council owned land. The Council's Traveller Protocol is in the process of being reviewed and updated and there will be training for members on this subject in March of next year.

Our Litigation Team are liaising with Preston Magistrates Court in order to locally implement the Single Justice Procedure ['SJP']. This enables cases to be dealt with by a single magistrate without the attendance of either a prosecutor or defendant outside of the traditional courtroom setting. It applies to cases involving adults charged with summary only non-imprisonable offences such as non-school attendance and refuse disposal offences, on guilty pleas. The process allows the defendant to engage with the court in writing and should significantly reduce costs in that prosecutors will not be required to attend court in such circumstances. This is likely to be implemented on or around the end of this year.

Improvements have been made to the members meeting room, meeting rooms B & C to accommodate waiting areas for bereaved families during Coroner's Inquests to be held in the Council Chamber.