

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR DIGITAL AND CUSTOMER SERVICES

COUNCILLOR MAHFOOZ HUSSAIN

**PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING
CHIEF OFFICERS: Assistant Director
CE, Strategic Director of Finance &
Resources**

Thursday, 23 March 2023

RESOURCES: Being a forward thinking and innovative Council

Civil Contingencies Service

The Civil Contingencies Service (CCS) continue to deliver emergency preparedness, response and recovery on behalf of the Council. A summary of recent and planned activity going forward are highlighted below:

Emergency Planning / Preparedness

- The rotas for the CCS Duty Officers and the Strategic Officers have been developed for April 2023 to March 2024, including twice weekly training continuing for the new Duty Officers.
- An advert will be posted in The Shuttle encouraging people to think about their emergency planning and preparedness, offering the opportunity to sign up for alerts and the utility companies priority services register.
- The Town Centre Evacuation Plan and the Elections Plan are currently being reviewed
- A training session for Elected Members that took place on 16th January 2023 comprised a combined session with the media and health & safety teams.
- The annual Corporate Exercise is being planned and will take place on 18th April 2023 for the Extended Leadership Team only. A debrief, report and recommendations will later be shared.
- A Bitesize emergency planning session with Public Health has been scheduled for the 27th March 2023

Schools

- A refreshed SLA for 2023/2024 has been launched and it will hopefully increase the number of schools under the CCS SLA
- The schools that signed up last year are still supported by 6 table top exercises, scheduled for March and April 2023
- A School Improvement Group Training session for those who requested it has taken place and further sessions are scheduled for the beginning of March 2023
- A table top exercise may be delivered in January/February 2023 for the BwD Corporate response to a school emergency, including visits, procedures and responsibilities that the education department should take.

Business Continuity / Business Continuity Promotion (BCP)

The majority of draft plans are completed and an audit will be held mid-March 2023, where staff will meet coordinators to review and challenge submissions where necessary. Once completed, a workshop will take place where Coordinators will be supported to work through Business Impact Analysis. The departmental plans will then inform the Corporate Business Continuity Plan, which will be presented to the Corporate Leadership Team.

Community Resilience / Volunteers

The Workshop / Volunteers Event that will take place on 9th March 2023 will be an opportunity for both internal and external volunteers to network, share experiences and meet key speakers from the Environment Agency, Lancashire Volunteer Partnership and Newground.

A brief on the UK's National Resilience Forum was delivered to the Health Protection Board, focusing on the Government's commitment to build the UK's resilience and empower LRF's, and local partners and leaders to strive for resilience in their communities and workplaces. Once mandates are received, recommendations will be addressed.

A member of the team is currently developing a Power BI data dashboard for gathering emergency statistical information. Colleagues who also collate emergency response data have been included and will be submitted on a quarterly basis. However, once the dashboard is set up it will provide real time information on emergencies and incidents the authority has responded to.

Below is the full Quarter 3 statistics:-

Duty Officer Statistics – Quarter 3 2022/23	
Information received	100
Warnings	113
TOTAL	213
Strategic Officer Activations	1
Duty Officer Activations	8

Below is the Quarter 4 statistics up until 20th February 2023 so not quite a full quarter:-

Duty Officer Statistics – Quarter 4 2022/23	
Information received	22
Warnings	107
TOTAL	129
Strategic Officer Activations	0
Duty Officer Activations	5

Health and Safety

There were 169 accidents, incidents and near misses in Q3, a rise from 136 in the same period last year. However, this has dropped from 218 incidents in Q2 this year. All areas have seen a fall in incidents, but it is more prevalent in Adults Services incidents relating to Albion Mill, showcasing an improvement in health and safety management. 104 incidents were reported by schools, a rise from the previous quarter. The latter did cover the summer holidays so this rise was expected.

Reports made to the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) under Reporting of Injuries, Disease and Dangerous Occurrence Regulation (RIDDOR) included:

- 2 Council reports in Q3 (resulting in over 7-day absences and investigations; remedial actions taken)
- 4 School reports (two resulting in over 7-day absences and two directed to the hospital following the incident)

29 near misses were reported by the Council, a fall from the 72 in Q2. Albion Mill accounted for a sizable number of Q2's near misses reports. Near miss reporting will continue being encouraged across all departments.

Key activity:

- Direct support to leisure services, with audits across the three sites (management support, staff training)
- Support of services based at the Depot (inspections, risk assessments, face-fit testing, full day health and safety training for the Street Cleansing Team)
- Zurich has undertaken a review of Hand-arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS) and Manual Handling. A report is being finalised, but early feedback has been positive
- Health Surveillance for employees exposed to noise and vibration, with the latest HAVS clinic held on the 21st of February, for electricians.
- All corporate health and safety guidance has been updated and reviewed and will be made available on the intranet
- First Aid training has been arranged at main sites, with some sessions already delivered, to ensure appropriate first aid cover across all council buildings
- Fire Marshall training delivered to Town Hall managers, in line with the revised evacuation procedures which take into account hybrid working. Training at Duke Street is planned for March
- Mandatory Health and Safety training, with three e-learning courses, has been relaunched. Working with DSE training is also mandatory to all relevant staff.
- Events Safety Advisory Group will move under the H&S Service remit from 1st April 2023
- The Violence & Aggression Focus Group which was launched last quarter has continued to meet, key updates include:
 - New policy was given feedback at LJNCC
 - Lone Worker App currently being trialled by 2 teams, feedback will be given at meeting in April.
 - Personal Safety Training is being developed and will roll out from April – specialist Conflict Management/De-escalation training has been sought for Parking Services team and delivery is due on 8 March.
- Corporate Compliance Checks have been agreed and now set up onto a Teams site. They will be rolled out in April for completion by June. All services and those with responsibility for a building will be expected to complete the check.

Schools

The Autumn Term inspection visits to schools that have purchased our SLA have been concluded and a report has been provided, which they can share with Governors. The Spring Term visit is focussing on accident, incident and near miss reporting, to ensure proper investigation ensues when required, having had positive feedback. The Spring Term newsletter is being drafted and will focus on topical and timely health and safety information and updates. Pricing details have been agreed for the SLA 2023/2024, which schools have already started to purchase.

Digital Services and Transformation

A number of new online forms have gone live in the last 2 months. Following on from recent work to improve Taxi licensing processes, drivers can now renew their licences on line. In addition residents and businesses will shortly be able to make Land and Assets enquiries, and payments online.

The Service Design team have assisted with the user research and planning for new legislation for the upcoming elections, providing an online form as well as engaging with many residents face to face over the last 2 months.

The team continue to provide significant support across both Adults and Childrens Services. Work is continuing to support both departments with their inspection readiness programmes. The team are supporting Leaving Care, with the purchase of an App for our Young People, and the Fostering Service with a full transformation review.

The LADO referral service within Childrens is now digitised. This has moved from a paper based referral process used by professionals to a user friendly, efficient process and feedback has been very positive.

Adults Service work continues with support on several major IT system implementations and support is being provided to implement the departments business plan and associated transformation work required to meet CQC inspection requirements.

Website and intranet –

The new website has been live since 3 November. Work is now underway to put a robust system of governance in place, to make sure that content continues to remain accessible, accurate and easy to find.

We have updated our Web Improvement Plan for 2023/24, which sets out our objectives for the year ahead, and looks at:

- content governance
- content design
- data and performance
- customer behaviour
- technological advancements and best practice
- legislative requirements

We have already improved the Feedback Form on the website, so that our customers can tell us specifically what they think about any individual page on the site. We have also worked on developing bespoke sections of content for areas such as Leaving Care.

The same platform is being used to build the new internal intranet site for staff. The technical specifications are being written, based on our user feedback, and development of initial templates has started. Work is underway to put a governance structure in place for the new site.

Customer Services

In January 2023, Customer services handled:

- 13026 calls, with 82% of calls answered in 60 seconds. 82% of customers were very satisfied with the service they received.
- 3501 chats, with 97% of chats answered within 60 seconds. 68% of customers were very satisfied with the service they received.
- 1984 emails, with 100% of emails answered within one working day. 66% of customers were very satisfied with the service they received
- 2098 visits to Blackburn and Darwen town halls, with visitors served with 98% of visitors served within 5 minutes.

- 352 blue badge applications, with an average processing time of 6 working days. 93% of applicants 'self-served' via our website.

January tends to be a busy month for the team following the Christmas break, and for winter maintenance requests and enquiries. However, due to the very mild weather, we have seen contact volumes decrease by 22% in comparison to January 2022.

Information and Communications Technology

The IT Team continue to work to ensure that the technology environment supports the existing and emerging business needs in a secure and sustainable way.

The design of the new Cloud environment has begun and orders have been placed to replace the core Council network. The project to deliver the new Unified Communications environment, replacing Skype, is progressing and will be delivered across the whole council by November 2023.

In recognition of the new and emerging threats that present to all businesses a tender is being prepared for a new Backup and Recovery environment. A government award of £150,000 was gained to support this work, and implementation is expected over the summer. The Council has many laptops that are over 4 years old and these are unable to support new business requirements. A strategy for replacement is being prepared, in the interim we are repairing and servicing old devices to keep them running. In order to support the very high workloads for the year technical support for staff is being migrated from telephone support to digital support environments over the coming months.

Data Strategy and Business Intelligence

The Council is currently working on the annual cycle of Business Planning and Performance refresh. This will see a new suite of Corporate performance measures agreed which will be used to track progress from April onwards. Aligned to this is the development of annual business plans for each directorate. These are being developed with an aim of publishing these alongside the new Corporate Plan.

The Council will utilise the software available within our Microsoft Office suite to develop automated and digital means of tracking the actions in Business Plans, and the new suite of Corporate performance measures. Reporting against these new metrics will take place from April 2023.

Information Governance and Security (inc GDPR)

Half Year update 2022-23 (Q3 October to December)

There were 16 new information assurance incidents during Q3 2022/23. All incidents are monitored as part of the breach reporting process. None have been of a significant enough nature to warrant referral to the ICO.

We have achieved the minimum requirement for compliance (90%) with requests for information under the FOIA for Q3 2022/23 recording an overall compliance rate of 94.63% and with requests under EIR with a compliance rate of 98.0%. In addition we have achieved the minimum requirement for compliance with GDPR/DPA2018 subject access requests (90%) in the 1st half year 2022/23 with a compliance rate of 97.92%.

DPA2018 subject access requests (90%) in Q3 2022/2023 with a compliance rate of 97.92%. We no longer have any historical SARs awaiting completion however, there is a 65.8% increase on the number of request made in 2022/2023 compared to 2021/2022, which may impact Q4 performance.

Mandatory IG training compliance is currently not at the minimum rate of 95%. Compliance with IG Training 2022/23 course stands at 88.06 % and the DOJO Cyber Security Training 2022/23 course compliance rate stands at 89.86%. This has been escalated to department leads with a recommendation to Chief Officers issued at CAB.

The new IG SLA for 2023/24 has been added to the SFS Portal with a slightly increased charge for the 2 Multi-Academy Trusts supported and the 3 out of borough schools. Prices have not increased for borough schools. Expected income generation for 2023/24 should all schools continue to buy back into the service is expected to be £54,215 before the SFS charge. During Q3 the Schools DP Officer delivered a number of face to face training sessions for schools on Data Protection and completed a Council Forum Update Half Year 2022-23 (Q3 October to December)

Complaints/Feedback

During the last quarter the Complaints team has dealt with an increasing number of MP enquires and complaints, in accordance with the policies and procedures. Although 221 informal complaints were received they were resolved quickly, and only 48 proceeded to the 'Stage 1' of the procedure. These related to drainage and residential parking complaints. Most complaints were related to highways and refuse collection, which is not unusual. The Complaints team also collate positive feedback for Council services, and during the same period 51 compliments were recorded, which was significant increase from the previous quarter. The majority of compliments were received around Adults Social Care (26). The team have also been working closely with the Digital Transformation team to set up a complaints dashboard on Power BI. The aim is for managers and directors to be able to access up to the minute feedback data for their service area/departments. This piece of work has been prioritised to allow early access to data in readiness for Adults Services inspections."

RIPA (Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act)

There have been no applications for authorisation for undertaking covert surveillance or to use a covert human intelligence source since 2019 nor have there been any such activities outside the RIPA legislation that merited the use of the NON-RIPA application process. Much of the Council's enforcement processes are done openly. This does not exempt the Council from having to have processes in place and the Council is subject to scrutiny by the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office. (IPCO)

On 3rd November 2022 there was an inspection of the Council's RIPA processes in the form of a Teams Meeting with an inspector appointed by the IPCO. After the inspection the IPCO recommended a number of minor amendments to the Council's procedure and guidance, mainly around the secure storage and use of the documentation including the RIPA authorisations and also some tightening of the processes for the lawful access to publicly available social media information. The Council's RIPA Co-ordinator is currently working through these amendments with a view to ensuring they are adopted corporately as soon as possible. Internal Audit are also currently conducting an audit of the RIPA processes. A web-based training course is also being developed by the RIPA Co-ordinator with the help of HR Learning and Development Team.

PEOPLE: Build happier, healthier and safer communities

School admission appeals

In that last quarter, the Governance team have administrated 119 school appeals, which is a 39% significant increase for the same period in 2021. The increase is mainly due to more families moving into the Borough.”