

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR DIGITAL AND CUSTOMER SERVICES

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CE

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Being a forward thinking and innovative Council

Civil Contingencies Service (CCS)

A total of 212 incidents were reported in Q4 2022/2023, 70 of them being information received and 142 being warnings. There were a total of 1 Strategic Officer and 10 Duty Officer Activations. Some of the emergencies responded to included power outages, flooding, fires and road traffic collisions.

A summary of recent and planned activity:

Emergency Planning / Preparedness

- The annual Corporate Exercise took place in April for the Extended Leadership Team which focussed on the response to a cyber-attack.
- A 12-month training programme has been developed for Duty Officers.
- All emergency plans will undergo a review in the coming year.

Schools

- Various table top exercises have been delivered to help schools test their emergency response plans. More are planned for the coming months.

Business Continuity / Business Continuity Promotion (BCP)

The majority of departmental business continuity plans are now complete and an audit of the plans has been undertaken with any further action required on the plans being highlighted. A workshop will now take place where coordinators will be supported to work through Business Impact Analysis and their arrangements.

Community Resilience / Volunteers

The Workshop / Volunteers Event took place on 9th March 2023 which was 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. Following the event the team recruited some new volunteers who will be trained to support the community in an emergency response.

Health and Safety (H&S)

There were 154 Council accidents, incidents and near misses reported in Q4, a slight fall on Q3. Incident reporting has increased from Leisure Services in particular, in part due to dedicated H&S support and focus. 115 incidents were reported by schools, a rise from the previous quarter and potentially due to the school visits focusing on accidents.

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

- 2 Council reports in Q4 (resulting in over 7-day absences and investigations; remedial actions taken)
- 1 School report in Q4 (resulting in over 7-day absence)

Near miss incident reports fell to 18 in Q4. The majority are from Environment and Leisure teams. All Council departments are actively encouraged to report and address near miss incidents.

A summary of recent and planned activity:

- Corporate Health and Safety Compliance checks are in progress and returns will be reviewed to develop the Health and Safety audit programme.
- A review of Hand-arm Vibration Syndrome (HAVS) and Manual Handling has been undertaken for relevant teams.
- Health Surveillance programme is ongoing, with regular clinics to manage risks to employees exposed to noise and vibration.
- Draft bill has now been released on Protect Duty or Martyn's Law and consideration is being given to next steps.
- There is a review underway of the Events Safety Advisory Group to ensure appropriate governance and oversight of events taking place across the borough.
- Following recent fires at Pleasington Crematorium and at Hancock St Children's Centre a full review of fire safety across all sites is being planned.

Schools

Spring term visits were undertaken focusing on accidents, incidents and near miss reporting and investigations, where the feedback was very positive. Spring and summer newsletters have also been written and shared with schools.

Digital Services and Transformation

Over 30 projects / transformation pieces have been approved for the Digital and IT teams to deliver over the next 12 months. These range from technical infrastructure, system replacements and new processes / ways of working. These will be governed through a new framework that is being put in place.

The team have been supporting Adult Social care in various ways including a review of the different *front doors* that the service operates and the type of enquiries coming in and Service user feedback.

- The team have been working closely with Children's Services in areas including Fostering, Family Hubs and Disabled Facilities Grants.

Website and Intranet

The website content lead has started work on the development of sub-sites for HR Recruitment and Climate Change. A sub-site will also be created for the Family Hubs. Sub sites allow for a slightly different branding, look and feel than the main website, but still use the same software and keep all sites in one place. Content improvements go hand in hand with the launch of new online forms to ensure that services are easy to find and use.

The development of a new intranet site is progressing well. The focus is ensuring information is accurate for staff to do their jobs effectively and that staff have access to news and what's going on around the Council. Initial feedback is that the site looks clearer and easier to use.

Information and Communications Technology

The design for a new Cloud environment has begun and orders to replace the core Council network have been placed. The project to deliver a new Unified Communication

environment, replacing Skype, is progressing. Implementation will depend on the supplier but is expected to start around November 2023.

During June, the IT team responded to a number of limited but focussed cyber attacks on the Council and also on some schools in the borough. The attacks on the Council were detected and managed without damage being caused to services.

Performance and Business Intelligence

The Council is developing a new suite of Corporate Key Performance Indicators which will be used to track our delivery against a range of significant Council responsibilities. There will be circa 40 measures that will be tracked on a regular basis. These new measures will be published online with supporting information highlighting their importance to the Council.

A key data project in the coming 12 months will be to support the Family Hubs programme. This will see a variety of data relating to vulnerable children and families brought together to provide front line professionals with a better picture of the family's needs. This will enable staff to have more informed conversations with families and provide more preventative help and support.

Information Governance and Security (inc. GDPR)

There were 18 new information assurance incidents during Q4 2022/23. All incidents are monitored as part of the breach reporting process. None have been referred to the ICO.

We have achieved the minimum requirement for compliance (90%) with requests for information under the FOIA for Q4 2022/23 recording an overall compliance rate of 94.05% and with requests under EIR with a compliance rate of 98.7%. In addition we have achieved the minimum requirement for compliance with GDPR/DPA2018 subject access requests (90%) during Q4 2022/23 with a compliance rate of 97.92%. DPA2018 subject access requests (90%) in Q3 2022/2023 with a compliance rate of 91.26%.

Mandatory IG training recorded a compliance rate of 96.44% for 2022/23. This enabled us to achieve our standards met requirement for the NHS IG Compliance audit. During Q4 2022/23 the Schools IG Officer delivered a number of face to face training sessions for schools on Data Protection, managed 6 Subject Access Requests on behalf of supported schools and dealt with a number of breaches including one reportable to the ICO.

The audit programme for the 23/24 SLA year will touch on aspects of previous versions such as training and breaches but will focus on reviewing, and where necessary, updating the Record of Processing Activity (ROPA) for each school

RIPA

In November 2022 the Council was inspected by the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office (IPCO). In his letter of 17 November 2022, the Inspector praised the Council's Procedure and Guidance and suggested a number of minor amendments which have now been made. The Inspector was informed of a desk-top training exercise undertaken last year and plans for a web-based training video on the Council's intranet to help raise RIPA awareness. The Council agreed to take the following steps to comply with the IPCO recommendations:

- To introduce a system whereby all social media and internet research is properly overseen by the RIPA Officer's Group every three months.
- To ensure material acquired under RIPA and the Investigatory Powers Act is properly retained, reviewed, and ultimately destroyed by all participants in the RIPA process including investigating officers, manager and authorising officers and
- To add appropriate wording to the RIPA Procedure and Guidance so that it provides practical guidance on the retention, review and destruction of RIPA authorisations.

Customer Services

In Q1, Customer Services handled 29,030 calls; 7000 chats; 4253 emails; 2999 visits to Blackburn and Darwen Town Halls and 928 Blue Badge applications. Customer satisfaction has been impacted by some online services being unavailable at times during the quarter, such as the MyBwD account and payment services.

Email satisfaction is also not necessarily an indicator of poor customer service but is pre-determined by the reason for emailing. For example, if the customer has received a council tax reminder or their bin has not been collected.

Throughout the quarter, we have added new content to our chat service, such as Planning and School Admissions, as we build up business intelligence. We have started to respond to Facebook Messenger enquiries via our chat service.

Complaints/Feedback

During the quarter 1 period, the Complaints team have received and dealt with:

- 159 MP enquiries
- 190 informal complaints
- 1 Comments/Suggestions/Queries
- 19 stage 1 complaints
- 0 stage 2 complaints
- 7 Ombudsman enquiries
- 63 compliments

The number of MP enquiries received have increased by 121% from the same period last year (72 MP Enquiries received for 2022-23 Q1 period). In the main these enquiries were around highways. We see a 43% decrease in informal complaints for this period compared to the same quarter last year. We also see an increase in Stage 1 complaints (from 6 to 19) as a consequence of an increase in Children's complaints.

Stage 2s see a decrease from 2 to 0 for the same period. The Feedback Team have been working hard to resolve complaints at the Stage 1 level thus de-escalating where appropriate after an initial review of the complaint.

A total of 63 compliments have been recorded for this reporting period, a 43% increase from the 2022-23 Quarter 1 period. The majority of compliments were received around Adults Social Care (23) and Corporate which also includes Education Services (23). This is as a result of the Feedback Team working together with the managers across departments in capturing positive feedback.

School admission appeals

Between 1st April and 30th June 2023, the team have successfully administrated 170 appeals. A breakdown of the results of these appeals are set out below:

Unsuccessful – 114
Successful – 32
Withdrawn – 24

Our current charging policy only extends to Free Schools and Academies, and we charge £240 per appeal, and £120 for each withdrawn appeal to cover cost of admin and organisation etc.

Of note, is that the team administered 96 appeals for the same period in 2022, which is a 44% increase. The reason for the increase is a result of more families moving into the Borough as well as International New Arrivals to the UK.

Registrars

Following the submission of the Annual Performance Report for 2022/23, the General Register Office (GRO) thanked the service for the hard work undertaken during a challenging year, as the service continues to work towards more normal working practices and focus on recovery following the Covid-19 pandemic.

The GRO was pleased to note the increased Birth performance targets from the previous year and that Still-Birth registrations remain consistent at 100%, as are the excellent appointment waiting times and levels of customer satisfaction across all statutory services. They also recognise the continued demand for marriages/civil partnerships that the service has faced this operational year.

Registration Service - activity during 2022/23:

12773 certificates issued
2939 deaths registered
406 people became British Citizens
447 couples were married
138 births registered