



Council 23 September 2014

CABINET MEMBER REPORT TO FULL COUNCIL

Report by Cllr David Ray Resources and Performance Portfolio

Portfolio includes:

- Legal and Democratic
- Elections
- Finance
- Internal Audit
- ICT
- Risk Management
- Performance Management
- Human Resources and Organisational Development
- Health and Safety
- Procurement
- Customer Access

1. Resources and Performance

1.1 Performance Management

- 1.1.1 The new 2014/15 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and first quarter performance were reported through the first joint Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee in July 2014 as detailed in report F75. These indicators were developed in discussions between Heads of Service and Portfolio Holders, with a view to giving particular focus on ensuring KPIs are used to evaluate our success, progress towards our strategic priorities and further align performance measurement across the two authorities.

1.2 New Shared Financial Management System

- 1.2.1 The Shared Agresso Business World Financial Management System (FMS) went live as scheduled on 1 April 2014: six months on and users are now more familiar with the system. However, there is still ongoing training and support with users, to ensure we gain the maximum use of the system.
- 1.2.2 Work continues on the system functionality for budgeting and forecasting to capture the 2015/16 budgets and Medium Term Financial Strategy as well as improved in year forecasting functionality for the current 2014/15 year end.

1.3 Budget outturn and statement of accounts – 2013/14

- 1.3.1 The 2013/14 budget outturn and financial highlights report was presented at the July Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee. Ernst and Young have been on site since July auditing the draft statement of accounts: the accounts and the auditor's report will be presented to members at the September Performance and Audit Scrutiny Committee for approval.

1.4 2015/16 Budget and Budget Consultation

- 1.4.1 The Council has commenced its budget consultation exercise to support budget decisions for the next two years. The public consultation has now closed and the results of the survey are being analysed to be presented to Cabinet in late Autumn linking into the budget setting process.
- 1.4.2 Discussions with Heads of Service, Service Managers and Business Partners have taken place to review the 2015/16 supplies and services budgets taking a zero based budget approach and exploring further savings as a result of shared services. These savings will be captured as part of the budget setting process and will be reported to members along with the other local savings in due course.

1.5 Behaving more commercially

- 1.5.1 A West Suffolk Member Development session on behaving more commercially was held at the Apex on Monday 14 July 2014. Members from St Edmundsbury Borough Council (SEBC) and Forest Heath District Council (FHDC) heard a presentation from Liz Watts and Liz Barnard on the latest position of West Suffolk's work on commercial behaviours, including some of the highlights from the Task and Finish Group. Members then spent time in small groups working on a series of case studies relating to potential commercial opportunities that the Councils might face.
- 1.5.2 Work is also continuing in a number of work areas where there is potential to make savings or generate income by behaving in a more commercial way, in particular, renewable energy generation; the future development of West Stow; and options for investment in housing development.

2. Anglia Revenues and Benefits Partnership (ARP)

- 2.1 Following the addition of three new partners a full restructure across the seven partners in the ARP has taken place and will see significant savings.

2.2 Benefits

- 2.2.1 Housing Benefit claims and changes of circumstances for St Edmundsbury were being processed within 6.29 days as at the end of July 2014 and 7.34 days for Council Tax Reductions, both within the target. These figures are all actual days not working days and displayed as an average.
- 2.2.2 On-line claims continue to increase. In this financial year to date 1,960 new benefit claim forms have been received on line, and a total of 3,204 forms across Benefits, Council tax and National Non Domestic Rates (NNDR), and comments on the use of the on line forms is very positive.

- 2.2.3 On request, landlords can now have the records of their payments/schedules sent via e-mail instead of by post so they receive them quicker and have less paperwork.
- 2.2.4 Regular liaison meetings are ongoing with Suffolk County Council (SCC), housing associations and other agencies to help the understanding of each others work and awareness of our mutual customers' needs.

2.3 Revenues

- 2.3.1 Collection rates are as follows:

	Collected by 31/7/14	Target to 31/7/14	Comparator figure for to 31/7/13
Council Tax Net Liability: £55,588.45	39.55%	39.78%	39.6%
NNDR (Business Rates) Net liability: £47,465,057	38.64%	39.71%	39.81%

- 2.3.2 Council Tax collection (CTS) for the year remains slightly lower than at the same point last year. Collection on cases where residents were previously on 100% benefit is significantly lower than on general cases (29.5%). Collection for those on full CTS collection (i.e. those receiving the lowest incomes and are liable for at least 8.5% of Council Tax Liability), is also substantially lower than amongst other groups (22.7%). Collection is particularly difficult from these groups where previously there was no liability for Council Tax. The recovery team continue to work with residents to help them meet payments without incurring additional recovery costs where possible. The Council Tax team is currently reviewing all empty properties to maximise the new homes bonus.

2.4 Business Rates

- 2.4.1 NNDR collection is slightly below last year's rate but is being monitored closely. The introduction of 12 monthly instalments has contributed to this reduction in performance but the collection rate should recover in the last two months of the year.
- 2.4.2 The Business Rates team is working with other services within the Council to ensure that all business intelligence is shared with the business rates team to ensure all potential changes to the business rates database are reflected in our records at the earliest opportunity.

2.5 Collection of Housing Benefit Overpayments

- 2.5.1 The Overpayment Collection team has been working to improve processes and methods of recovery over the past 18 months. This has resulted in an increase in monies recovered, circa £70,000 per annum for St Edmundsbury. This complements the work of the Fraud team to ensure where fraud is detected, monies are recovered.

3. Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

- 3.1 The focus of ICT work continues to be on the joining up of business systems used in the various service areas, replacing the separate systems previously used by Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury and migrating them to operate as a single system.
- 3.2 Those already in progress at various stages of advancement are:
- Single shared main website (implementation stage)
 - Single shared intranet (design stage)
 - Geographical Information system – GIS (procurement stage)
 - Elections management system (deployment scheduled for December)
 - Committee minutes system (implementation stage)
- 3.3 In addition ICT are currently deploying the new Asidua CCP Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system to support the new centralized Customer Services team, and the initial phase of this project is now live.
- 3.4 A corporate integration solution has been procured and deployed, training delivered, and an additional temporary developer appointed specifically to work on systems integration. This is to support the growing need for our systems to share data, especially the new CRM system.
- 3.5 Work to migrate Revenues and Benefits services from Fenland District Council into ARP is well underway and this project is now entering the user testing phase.
- 3.6 The work to join FHDC and SEBC ICT network infrastructure for sharing of services has recently been recognised and shortlisted for a national APSE award in the category of "Best Information Technology and Communication Initiative".

4. Internal Audit

4.1 Corporate Work

- 4.1.1 The approach to this year's Internal Audit Plan is different to previous years. As well as continuing to perform the usual statutory fundamental systems audits, we are increasing the emphasis given to proactively assist with corporate projects. Timely audit input can help prevent or bring early resolution to internal control or governance issues. Work we have recently been, or are currently, engaged in includes:
- examining the processes and controls in the Customer Services area
 - reviewing, and advising on, debt management and recovery processes across West Suffolk
 - producing a West Suffolk Fees and Charges Policy and reviewing relevant information related to this
 - considering the processes and controls operating around fuel receipts and other related areas
 - research, and preparation of briefing notes, on a number of areas on behalf of the Head of Resources and Performance.
- 4.1.2 Internal Audit has been working with colleagues as part of the Joint Governance Group in drafting the West Suffolk 2013/14 Annual Governance

Statement. This is the first joint Annual Governance Statement with FHDC and reflects the shared working arrangements between the two councils.

5. Human Resources

- 5.1 The Human Resources, Learning and Development and Health and Safety teams continue to support a range of organisations and partners through significant organisational change.
- 5.2 The Anglia Revenues Partnership (ARP) has expanded to include the provision of Revenues and Benefits services to Fenland, Suffolk Coastal and Waveney Councils. The HR team has provided significant full time support to restructure the organisation. The Strategic Managers (Revenues, Benefits and Support) were appointed with effect from 1 April 2014 (reporting to the Head of ARP, Paul Corney), and the remainder of the ARP workforce has now been realigned into new teams and the workforce reduced. This has resulted in further shared staff savings of approximately £470,000 per annum (across the partnership) by joining management structures and through other staff savings, in particular from sharing support services. Duplicated posts are removed, and work has been reorganised to continue to deliver an efficient and effective Revenues and Benefits Service.
- 5.3 During the summer period we have employed four interns providing undergraduates the opportunity to learn about the work of local government and develop their employability skills, in support of the Raising the Bar/Rising High initiative in Suffolk. They have worked in Policy, Economic Development and Human Resources and have been involved in projects within those teams. Their internship ends with an event at Endeavour House, which showcases their individual achievements to an audience of invited guests, alongside other Suffolk interns.
- 5.4 We currently have 15 apprentices across the two partner councils, significantly exceeding our target of nine, that being one per Head of Service. For the first time we have an apprentice working across corporate services such as the Mayoralty, Democratic Services, and Elections on a rotational basis, which gives a unique insight to a young person into the working of democracy. Also, for the first time we are offering apprenticeships in housing.
- 5.5 We have two Heritage trainees externally funded for a year and studying towards an NVQ Level 3 qualification in Heritage management. We have employed a 6-month Creative Intern working on an Arts project also funded in part through the creative employment programme.
- 5.6 We are supporting staff new to managing apprentices, with advice and guidance from the learning and development advisor and a 'Lunch and Learn' session on managing apprentices held on 2 September 2014.
- 5.7 The Joint Pay Policy was approved at full council on 30 June 2014, renewing our commitment to the paying of the National Living wage this year, and the pay ratio of the highest and lowest paid employees, ensuring that we have a sound and appropriate ratio in place. Work continues on policy review with new joint policies being discussed at the Joint Staff Consultative Panel in September 2014.

- 5.8 Service Manager and Business Partner Forums continue to develop the capacity and understanding at this level across the organisation and involve this key group in successful organisation development, and transformational change. The most recent session involved and informed this group on the importance of setting expectations and leading culture change. The forums enable middle managers to share best practice and network together as they deal with operational matters in their services.
- 5.9 We have had 56 of our Service Managers and Business Partners, and the Joint Leadership Team involved to date in the "Go make a Difference" accelerated change programme. This included classroom sessions introducing new ways of working, followed up with challenge sessions and action learning designed to support them in delivery, use of the techniques, and meeting new levels of expectation. This has also further developed a common understanding and approach to leadership and management across the Councils. The feedback has been positive; and the challenges continue to embed the changes and learning and ensure the initiative is used effectively.
- 5.10 The Health & Safety team continues to support ARP and will roll out an online training package to them in the next few months. The Health and Safety policy (issue 3) has been reviewed and approved.
- 5.11 After the final moves at West Suffolk House, all of the emergency procedures have been reviewed and briefed to the relevant persons.
- 5.12 There have been a number of incidents classified as Violence at Work (VAW), these have been dealt or in the process of being dealt with, with the help of third parties, including police.
- 5.13 Having seen a number of summer events successfully delivered without Health & Safety issues, the focus is now on the lead up to the Christmas Fayre.
- 5.14 The HR team's work has been recognised in the national APSE (Association of Public Service Excellence) 2014 Awards, where the work we have done has resulted in the team being shortlisted for developing apprenticeship schemes and providing quality apprenticeships (Best Employment and Equality Initiative). We have also been shortlisted for the Best Efficiency Initiative as a whole council for our workforce transformation work. This reflects the work done across all the services across teams, with operational and support services working together with members to achieve successful joint outcomes and significant savings, whilst delivering differently. We have also been recognised for our Reward Strategy alignment with Business Strategy and for our innovative work with the Waste teams supporting the implementation of the new HR Self-Service package.

6. Member Development (June 2014 –August 2014)

- 6.1 Following the positive feedback from the first three Front-line Member events, a fourth event was held for all members to discuss and contribute to "Behaving More Commercially".
- 6.2 We encourage all members to attend member development events and we are always willing to consider suggestions from members on the content of the programme. We received a 67% return on the Training Needs Analysis

forms sent out to all members and have based the core of the forthcoming Member Development programme on the results of this survey.

- 6.3 Details of forthcoming events are published in Members News. After development and training events have taken place, presentations are available for download from the Members area on GOLD.
- 6.4 Work continues on the assessment for the Charter for Elected Member Development. Formal and final assessment takes place 11 September 2014. External reviewers undertake the assessment and there is considerable member involvement in the process which is being led by the Joint Member Development Group.

7. Procurement Activity

- 7.1 Following the recent approval of the West Suffolk Procurement Strategy and new contract procedural rules, the next stage was to “roll them out” across both Authorities. Procurement has delivered a total of nine training sessions in July and August to which all buying officers were invited. The training included an overview of the Strategy and Rules together with a practical session using the Suffolk Sourcing e-portal.
- 7.2 Further work has been undertaken by Procurement to develop a Renewable Contract Register for each Authority. Not only will the Register be available on the Gold site it is also linked through to the Suffolk Sourcing site, which is available to the general public.

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