

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION
19 NOVEMBER 2015
7.30 - 9.15 PM**



Present:

Councillors Leake (Chairman), Angell (Vice-Chairman), Mrs Angell, Mrs Birch, Brossard, Finnie, Harrison, Mrs McCracken, Mrs Mattick, Phillips and Mrs Temperton and Tullett (substitute for Councillor Allen)

Executive Members:

Councillor Heydon, Executive Member for Transformation and Finance
Councillor McCracken, Executive Member for Culture, Corporate Services and Public Protection

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillors Allen and Porter
Mr R Briscoe and Mrs L Wellsted (Parent Governor Representatives)

In Attendance:

Richard Beaumont, Head of Overview and Scrutiny
Tony Madden, Chief Officer: Human Resources
Bobby Mulheir, Chief Officer: Customer Services
Alison Sanders, Director of Corporate Services

28. Minutes and Matters Arising

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Commission meeting held on 24 September 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

29. Declarations of Interest and Party Whip

Councillor Mrs Birch declared an interest as the spouse of the Executive Member for Adult Services, Health and Housing. Councillor Mrs McCracken declared an interest as the spouse of the Executive Member for Culture, Corporate Services and Public Protection.

30. Urgent Items of Business

There were no urgent items of business.

31. Public Participation

There were no submissions from members of the public in accordance with the Council's Public Participation Scheme for Overview and Scrutiny.

32. Human Resources

The Chief Officer: Human Resources gave a presentation and made the following points:

- The key activities of the human resources function were; organisational development, workforce planning, policy development, employee relations, contractual and employment law advice, occupational health and welfare, corporate health and safety, learning and development and problem solving.
- Total employee costs amounted to £164 million (£110 million accounting for schools staff). This was the single largest spend for the Council and so it was critical that the human resources function was undertaken in a cost effective way and provided value for money.
- The Chief Officer: Human Resources had four officers directly reporting to him as well as having professional responsibility for the human resources function embedded in the three service departments. There were 33 FTE Human Resources officers in total in the Council.
- The Chief Officer outlined the recent achievements of the human resources service, this included implementing 184 redundancies over the past four years. The roll out of the e-learning concept, the Good to Great Programme, preparing for a new HR/payroll system and developing the use of online forms and webpages. In addition, moving the workforce to a more flexible way of working, a new digitised appraisal scheme and addressing the issue of lower paid workers.
- Some of the challenges in the future would include; operating under reducing financial resources and the need to reduce staffing resources by between 10 and 15% over the next four years. The transformation programme and the senior officer demographic 'bulge' and its implications. In addition, the greater use of technology, flexible and mobile working, legislative change and looking at new ways to resource the workforce.

In response to members' queries, the Chief Officer reported that;

- One of the particularly difficult challenges in recent times had been job evaluation and equal pay. This had proved to be difficult to tackle and officers had spent considerable time providing evidence to show that the Council's pay and grading structure was fair.
- The transformation programme currently underway would review all support services and as a result all management structures could be considered and the most cost effective model adopted.
- The Chief Officer reported that secondments internally and with other local authorities were always considered. Currently the civil service were offering three fast track graduates at no charge to the Council and this would be explored further.
- The primary comparator for staff sickness rates and turnover were other similar sized local authorities, the private sector was considered not to be a like for like comparator.
- Staff were being provided with e-learning opportunities as well as more traditional training opportunities. Work had been undertaken to achieve greater value for money so that staff still had access to the same level of training opportunities.
- In terms of the senior demographic bulge, given the senior nature of the posts there would be plenty of notice that any senior officer wished to retire. In addition, implications around access to pensions may encourage officers to stay in post longer.

In response to members' queries, the Director of Corporate Services reported that it would be key to keep staff informed and involved throughout the reviews that would be taking place as a result of the transformation programme and to assure staff that

there would be no knee jerk reactions, decisions would be planned and considered. This would be important to ensure that staff morale was maintained.

The Executive Member reported that given the cost of hiring people was the Council's single largest spend, the human resources function was an important one. In particular over the next few years, as the transformation programme was worked through the Council, the role of human resources would be critical.

The Chairman thanked the Chief Officer for his informative and interesting presentation. He stated that the human resources function was key as it valued people. It would be important over the next few years to be open and honest with staff and to treat people fairly and with respect and the human resources function would play a central role in this.

The Chairman offered his thanks to the Chief Officer on behalf of the Commission and personally for all the work that he had undertaken over the years. He stated that the services of the Chief Officer had been valued by him personally as well as much more widely and wished him well for the future.

33. **Customer Contact**

The Chief Officer: Customer Services gave a presentation and made the following points:

- The customer contact strategy was first adopted in 2003, more recently the 2011-2014 strategy had been extended to 2016. A channel shift strategy had been adopted as it presented the most cost effective means of contact with the public. The savings gained from website use as opposed to face to face or telephone contact were considerable.
- Key performance indicators included 92% of calls were answered within 20 seconds, abandoned call rates were under five percent and customer satisfaction was over 75%.
- The Council's website had experienced 6.3million views in the last year, providing strong evidence that this was the method that customers preferred to contact the Council in most instances. The Chief Officer had responded to this by reducing Customer Service staff and increasing website staff, who were now well established in the overall team.
- The benefits of the CRM system included that customers could manage their own accounts and track progress themselves. It enabled a customised service, provided visibility and reduced avoidable contact. 7,500 customers had now set up an account.
- At present the CRM system could accommodate customer online accounts, allow integration with Highway services and Capita to take payments. In addition, diary bookings.
- The next tranche of services to be integrated into the CRM system were Registrars, Electoral, Council Tax, Licensing, Pest Control, Environmental Health and the E+ card.
- The Chief Officer reported that it was crucial to understand customer journeys and to structure the website around that. Website redevelopment would be continual and respond to customer preferences and developments in technology.

The Chairman commended the improvements which had been achieved. In response to members' queries, the Chief Officer made the following points:

- The Chief Officer reported that a major project had recently been undertaken across the Council to map data flows of anyone taking payments, to ensure there was an understanding of exactly where encrypted data was being held. Suppliers including Capita had assured officers that data was being held within the EU and was very securely held. In addition, Capita would be imminently upgrading their level of security of encrypted data and a recent internal audit report had concluded there was 'significant assurance' over the security of web transactions. Members requested that the Chief Officer provide a brief explanation of what each level of security meant.
- The Chief Officer reported that whilst there were peaks and troughs throughout the year in the workload of the customer services team, it was not efficient to staff to peak levels and as a result staffing was maintained at an average level. Changes in weather and school admissions often led to peaks to customer contact. Peaks were managed by carefully managing staff leave and ensuring that staff worked to strict rules. It took six months to train customer services staff, given the wide range of calls they would be expected to deal with and as a result temporary staff could not be deployed.
- A call back service was hoped to be used in the future, to be offered to customers who were waiting more than 30 seconds, it was recognised that this would need to be managed and implemented carefully.

The Executive Member and Chairman thanked the Chief Officer: Customer Services for her informative presentation and was pleased to see the close working relationship between customer services and ICT services.

34. **Complaints Against the Council in 2014/15**

The Head of Overview and Scrutiny reported that the number of complaints lodged at stage two and above had fallen by 25% in 2014/15. He also highlighted the changes in the Local Government Ombudsman's treatment of complaints and that the Corporate Complaints Procedure had been streamlined from four stages to three as detailed in paragraph 5.22 of the report.

The Commission noted the report.

35. **Quarterly Service Reports (QSRs) 2015/16**

Corporate Services Quarterly Service Report:

In response to members' queries, the Director of Corporate Services agreed to confirm arrangements for informing Members about schools becoming academies, in particular St Margaret Clitherow RC as many members' were unaware of this.

It was noted that the Catholic Diocese had taken a decision that all its schools should become academies.

The Director of Corporate Services reported that a social landlord was being sought for the disposal of East Lodge following the withdrawal of Radian Housing Association's offer. Planning permission had already been tested, making East Lodge an attractive proposition. The relevant Executive Member's approval would be sought to go forward with seeking another social landlord.

The Commission noted the Chief Executive's Office Quarterly Service Report.

36. **Executive Forward Plan**

The Commission noted the forthcoming items on the Executive Forward Plan of a corporate nature.

37. **Work Programme and Panel Activity Update**

The Commission noted the progress against the Overview and Scrutiny work programme 2015-16 and the reports from Overview and Scrutiny Panel Chairmen on each Panel's progress against the work programme.

The Chairman of the Adult Social Care O&S Panel reported that good progress was being made by the Panel. The Panel had met in September and looked at the Safeguarding Adults Annual Report. The Panel had also looked at deferred payments and the way in which payments would be claimed from clients after death and how this was managed. The Panel had also considered the Council's Homelessness Policy.

CHAIRMAN