Business Improvement and Communications Progress Report

1.   Purpose of Report

1.1   To give an overview of the functions of the Business Improvement and
Communications Business Unit and related elements of the Annual Governance
Statement process in line with the Audit Committee programme.

2.   Functions of the Business Unit

2.1   The Business Unit has five broad functions reporting to the Service Director, Business
Improvement and Communications:

- Business Improvement and Intelligence (including the Overview and Scrutiny
function)
- Communications, Marketing and Campaign Management
- Corporate Programme and Project Management
- Equality and Inclusion
- Organisation and Workforce Improvement (including the Member Development
function)

2.2   The core purpose of the business unit is to,

*'Provide high quality, value for money, customer focussed, professional and strategic
core services'.*

The Business Unit is responsible for driving and delivering business improvement and
communications to ensure the organisation is a customer focussed, modern, efficient
and commercial minded Future Council.

3.   Related Elements of the Annual Governance Statement

3.1   The business unit has a role in ensuring assurance against the following elements of
the Annual Governance Statement:

- **Management Arrangements** – services can demonstrate compliance with the
Managing People Framework through the completion of Performance and
Development Reviews (P&DR)

- **Performance Management** – Business Units can demonstrate they have a
Business Plan in place which brings together several individual corporate
requirements into one streamlined document that ensures Business Units can
collectively review and consider all elements together, and provide a forward look
to 2020. Also, Business Plans have been subject to Directorate check and
challenge, which were led by the Executive Director and attended by the Business

Improvement & Intelligence Team, and have subsequently been stored centrally on the BLT drive, which is accessible by all members of SMT/BLT and other appropriate officers within the Council.

- **Equality and Inclusion** – Directorates can demonstrate their compliance with Equality and Inclusion arrangements through the inclusion of Equality and Inclusion information within Decision Making reports.

Performance and Development Review (P&DR) Completions

3.2 At the end of Quarter 4 (31st March 2017) a report was submitted to the Senior Management Team showing that P&DR completions for the Council were just over 51%. Whilst this is lower than expected, recent changes to the P&DR process could provide an explanation for this:

3.3 Following feedback from managers and employees regarding problems with the inflexibility of the set P&DR timetable, it was agreed that the set dates would be removed. This would allow managers to undertake and complete P&DRs at a time to suit their particular business needs. As managers start to realign completion of their teams' P&DRs to their preferred timescale, it will mean that some will fall 'out of time' resulting in a drop in the number of completions reported.

3.4 Our revised business planning process has now been completed. Many managers will have waited to complete P&DRs until their business plans were finalised so that they can ensure there is a clear link between the Corporate Plan, business plans and individual objectives and goals.

3.5 We are commencing a review of the current P&DR process in July 2017 involving employees and managers from across the organisation in focussed workshops to look at potential improvements for the scheme to be implemented from April 2018.

3.6 Past evaluation of P&DRs has concentrated on the quantity undertaken and not the quality of the discussion, therefore the design of any future scheme must have this at its core.

3.7 The workshops will look at the design and development of the future scheme to ensure it is fit for purpose and sustainable. It must add value to the Council and align with and support the achievement of the Corporate Priorities and Outcomes as outlined in the Corporate Plan 2017 – 20.

3.8 Once the workshops are concluded then further consultation will take place during the development of the future scheme with representatives from across the Council, particularly with those hard to reach groups of employees who do not have daily access to technology to ensure the scheme is suitable for all.

3.9 The new process will be supported by the new learning management system (the POD) which is due for introduction in September 2017 for course bookings and April 2018 for the appraisal solution.

Performance Management

3.10 Business planning is the Council's systematic and continuous process of making decisions to meet future demands, organising the resources required to carry out these decisions and measuring the results against expectations. It is not to simply forecast, deal with future decisions or an attempt to eliminate risk.

3.11 In 2016/17 the Council took a different approach to its business planning process including a forward look to 2020. The revised approach aimed to give Business Units ownership of their own business plans and bring together several individual corporate requirements into one streamlined process, ensuring that Business Units could collectively review and consider all elements together.

3.12 The new Business Unit planning template encompassed all of the following areas:

- Finance
- Risk
- Business Continuity
- Performance
- Enablers
- Workforce Planning & Workforce Development
- Research & Business Intelligence
- Communications & Marketing
- ICT
- Commissioning
- Customer & Employee Insight

3.13 Business plans were subject to Directorate check and challenge, which were led by the Executive Director and attended by the Business Improvement & Intelligence Team.

3.14 All finalised business plans were submitted on time and copies of the finalised business plans are all stored centrally, as well as being shared with Business Units.

Equality and Inclusion

3.15 All local authorities have a legal obligation (Equality Act 2010) to give "due regard" to the impact its policies and decisions could have on diverse groups where this may differ from the population as a whole. The tool we use to do this is the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) process.

3.16 When preparing a report for a decision by Cabinet, Council Officers should consider the impact this will have on different groups, undertake any appropriate consultation with stakeholders to inform this, and identify reasonable actions that could be taken to mitigate any negative or unequal impacts on those groups.

3.17 The EIA process is a flexible one, which should be proportionate to the risk of any negative or unequal impacts the decision may have. The outcome of this EIA process should be summarised in the Cabinet report to ensure that Cabinet are fully aware of the impact of any recommendations they are asked to make a decision on.

3.18 These EIA's and subsequent Cabinet reports should be robust; the Cabinet report should include a summary of the potential inequalities, the evidence behind this

assessment, and the mitigations actions that were considered and, where reasonable, implemented.

3.19 The Equality and Inclusion team assess the robustness of Cabinet reports by analysing a sample of cabinet reports throughout the year and across every directorate. Each report is then rated as Good, Satisfactory or Poor. The findings are reported to each Directorate's management team so we can learn what worked and where we need to improve in the future.

4. Other Issues Affecting Elected Members

4.1 Member P&DR Completions

The Business Unit is responsible for the member development function and programme. One of the key performance metrics for this area is P&DR completions and the completion rate for 2016/17 was 86%.

4.2 Overview & Scrutiny

The Business Unit is responsible for the Overview and Scrutiny function and annual work programme. One of the key performance metrics for this area is Elected Member attendance at the committee and for 2016/17 the attendance rate was 69%.

5. Conclusion / Recommendations

5.1 This report is presented for information.

6. Background papers

6.1 Business Improvement and Communications Business and Delivery Plans and Annual Governance Statement are available for inspection.

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