

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 Programmes, Projects, Feedback and Improvement
- 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 have Business Plan in place which brings together several individual corporate requirements into one streamlined document. This ensures that Business Units can collectively review and consider all elements together in relation to the delivery of our three priorities and One Council outcomes. Business Plans were subject to check and challenge at dedicated SMT sessions. The business plans for each unit have subsequently

been published on the intranet and the supporting delivery plans and other documentation are available on the BLT SharePoint Site.

- **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 (PDR)

- 3.2 In order to further improve the PDR process, consultation workshops were held with managers and employees during 2017 to identify what was working well and what changes and improvements needed to be made. As a result of the feedback, a new PDR process was developed and implemented in April 2018.
- 3.3 As reported in the last Audit report dated 19th July 2017, the most important element of a PDR is the quality of the conversation. With this in mind, comprehensive guidance has been developed which sets out the importance of a good PDR and how managers and employees should prepare for the meeting to ensure it is effective. Training sessions were also held to give managers and employees a demonstration of the new process, gain an understanding of what a quality PDR should include and provide an opportunity for them ask questions.
- 3.4 The new PDR process has been built into the council's learning management and appraisal system, The Pod. This includes an electronic workflow between the manager and employee to enable both to add comments and to formally approve the summary of the discussion. This enables the PDR to be electronically signed off and saved into the system as a record of the PDR.
- 3.5 Using feedback from the consultation workshops, the PDR form itself has been simplified. Drop down boxes, which forced managers to select from a list of limited options, have been removed and replaced with free text boxes. Step by step guidance has been developed which sets out clearly how to complete the new form.
- 3.6 As part of the consultation process, individual meetings were held with managers of non-networked employees to discuss with them problems they encountered with the previous process and to agree a way forward. As a result of these conversations, a different process has been put in place for non-networked employees. This enables a copy of the manual PDR form to be saved into The Pod so an electronic record of the PDR is available. It also ensures that manual PDRs can easily be included within the completion statistics, something that was difficult with the previous process.
- 3.7 At the end of Quarter 4 (31st March 2018) PDR completions for the council were 51.6% which is 0.5% higher than the same quarter last year (51.1%). Appendix 1 shows a breakdown of completions by directorate and business unit.

- 3.8 Initial feedback about the changes to the PDR process has been very positive with officers reporting that they like the new format and benefits the flexibility brings. It is anticipated that as a result of the changes and improvements made and the positive feedback received PDR completions will show an increase over the year.
- 3.9 Now that the revised PDR process is operational, future developments will concentrate on further improving the quality of conversations and increasing PDR completions. A new accountability framework is currently being developed which sets out areas of responsibility for managers including PDR completions. Once implemented, it is expected that completion rates should increase.
- 3.10 The council has also procured a provider to deliver 'coaching conversations' training to all employees. The skills developed as part of this training will enable participants to hold quality coaching style conversations which should positively benefit the PDR process, in particular the quality of the discussion.

Performance Management

- 3.11 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.
- 3.12 Since the new approach was introduced in 2016/17 we have done some further work to refine the process. The revisions aim 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.
- 3.13 As part of the process for 2018/19, Business Units produced a business plan with a supporting delivery plan and workforce plan which included the following;
- 2018/19 Delivery against the four council priorities
 - Looking forward to 2020
 - Customer focus
 - Performance management
 - Organisational improvement
 - Digital focus
- 3.14 Business plans were subject to SMT check and challenge across 3 dedicated sessions.
- 3.15 All finalised business plans were submitted on time and the finalised business plans are all published on the intranet and are available to all members of staff.

Equality and Inclusion

- 3.16 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.

- 3.17 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.
- 3.18 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.
- 3.19 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.
- 3.20 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.
- 3.21 For the period April 2017 to March 2018 76 cabinet reports were assessed with 62 (82%) of these being considered to have addressed potential inequalities robustly. However 14 (18%) were considered not to have done so sufficiently. The findings were reported to each Directorate's management team so we can learn what worked and where we need to improve in the future.
- 3.22 The performance for each individual directorate is as follows:

<i>Directorate</i>	<i>Poor</i>	<i>Adequate</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Total*</i>	<i>% Good / Adequate</i>
Communities	3	5	1	9	66.7%
Core	1	23	5	29	96.6%
People	6	9	1	16	62.5%
Place	3	12	4	19	84.2%
Public Health	1	2	0	3	66.7%
Total	14	51	11	76	81.6%

Corporate Programmes, Projects, Feedback and Improvement

- 3.23 The service provides three key functions:
- Corporate Programmes and Projects: overseeing a corporate approach to both programme and project management, ensuring governance arrangements are effectively managed; reporting supports decision making and activity contributes towards the Council's corporate priorities
 - Customer Feedback and Improvement: supporting our business units to effectively manage complaints, compliments, comments and information requests to drive continuous improvement and improving the customer experience

- Business Improvement and Communications Continuous Improvement: supporting our business units to strive for excellence through re-designing and re-engineering services, systems and processes

3.24 In line with the Council's Corporate Plan, the Customer Feedback and Improvement Team (CFIT) is committed to ensuring a genuine focus is placed upon its customers; placing them at the heart of what we do. As such, it is undertaking a schedule of work in reshaping internal processes designed to effectively manage customer expectations.

3.25 The submission of feedback (compliments, complaints, and comments) is an important means in which a customer can inform the Council about their experiences. The Council's Annual Customer Feedback Report 2017/18 sets out a number of headline figures which demonstrates its performance against its values and behaviours. A copy of the report is set out in Appendix 2.

3.26 In 2017/18, the service received 490 compliments, an increase from 458 in 2016/17 and 317 complaints, a decrease from 504 in 2016/17. Whilst this is encouraging to note, during 2018/19 the CFIT is committed to undertaking the following activities:

- Work in collaboration with services to strengthen its learning from complaints received and internal process arrangements
- Explore how it ensures our most vulnerable customers know how to make a complaint, including customers who are receiving a service paid for by the Council whilst delivered by a third party
- Explore how it captures and reports on all compliments and complaints made directly to other organisations that provide services on the Council's behalf

3.27 To achieve this, it will act as a 'critical friend' and engage in offering constructive challenge in relation to programmes, projects and review of customer feedback against corporate priorities, outcomes, strategies and plans in order to drive continuous improvement.

4. Other Issues Affecting Elected Members

4.1 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 2017/18 the attendance rate was 67.2%.

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.

Appendix 1

Summary of Performance and Development Reviews Completed as at: 31 March 2018						
12 Months	P&DR Complete		P&DR Incomplete		Incomplete with Reason	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Council (Whole)	1629	51.6	1470	46.6	56	1.8
Chief Executive	0	0.0	6	100.0	0	0.0
Management	0	0.0	6	100.0	0	0.0
Communities	519	65.1	270	33.9	8	1.0
Customer Services	400	72.9	141	25.7	8	1.5
Information Services	83	66.4	42	33.6	0	0.0
Stronger, Safer and Healthier Communities	35	28.9	86	71.1	0	0.0
Management	1	50.0	1	50.0	0	0.0
People	406	55.0	311	42.1	21	2.8
Adult Social Care	125	77.2	33	20.4	4	2.5
Children's Social Care and Safeguarding	157	66.0	77	32.4	4	1.7
Education, Early Start and Prevention	123	36.6	200	59.5	13	3.9
Management	1	50.0	1	50.0	0	0.0
Place	419	45.8	479	52.3	17	1.9
Culture, Housing and Regulation	93	62.4	56	37.6	0	0.0
Economic Regeneration	86	35.4	148	60.9	9	3.7
Environment and Transport	239	45.9	274	52.6	8	1.5
Management	1	50.0	1	50.0	0	0.0
Core	217	39.2	328	59.2	9	1.6
Assets	45	51.1	41	46.6	2	2.3
Business Improvement and Communications	46	68.7	20	29.9	1	1.5
Elections and Land Registers	4	66.7	2	33.3	0	0.0
Finance	3	1.5	196	96.6	4	2.0
Governance and Member Support	11	61.1	7	38.9	0	0.0
Health and Safety	0	0.0	8	100.0	0	0.0
Human Resources and Business Support	101	78.3	26	20.2	2	1.6
Legal Services	7	21.2	26	78.8	0	0.0
Management	0	0.0	2	100.0	0	0.0
Public Health	68	46.9	76	52.4	1	0.7
Public Health	31	39.2	48	60.8	0	0.0
0-19	37	56.1	28	42.4	1	1.5

Note: Incomplete without reason includes employees on maternity leave, career breaks and long-term sickness.