

CABINET – 30th SEPTEMBER 2010

CORPORATE SERVICES – CABINET MEMBERS' REPORT

LEGAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT - CORPORATE SERVICES

Legal Services were recently instructed to try and remove a video from two websites which contained defamatory comments about a Sefton MBC employee. The videos were successfully removed.

A staff working group has been established to make preparations for any office move as part of the Corporate Services integration work stream.

Children & Social Care Team

The team are grateful for the increase in support afforded by the appointment of a locum legal assistant to cover maternity leave for one of the legal assistants. This will ease the pressure on the team with regard to administrative and legal support tasks. The team continue to be very busy with several new cases being issued and ongoing proceedings filling the Court diary.

Planning, Environmental & Property Team

The Planning Environment & Property Team's current work includes the following projects:-

- Warranties for the Tannery Site in Bootle
- Review of Contract Procedure Rules
- New Netherton Activity Centre
- Southport Cultural Centre
- Southport Market Redevelopment
- Development Agreement for Penpoll Site in Bootle
- Drafting Standard Allotment Agreement
- Agreement for site investigation works at Kew, Southport
- Voluntary Registration of Council's land ownership
- Scanning conveyancing paperwork for future reference

PERSONNEL DEPARTMENT

A. Pay & Grading Review/Equal Pay

1. The process of implementing the Pay & Grading Review is currently due to take place on 1st October 2010. As agreed by the Pay & Grading Committee, implementation will now be effective 1st October 2010. A number of issues are being resolved with discussions between trade unions and officers. There are also a number of queries which are being raised by the workforce.

2. Consultation with regard to allowances and enhancements has taken place with the trade unions. These changes are considered necessary to simplify pay and prevent costs rising further after job evaluation is implemented.
3. The trade unions did initially indicate that they intended to ballot their members on whether to accept the changes in pay structure and the allowances, however, the trade unions have now indicated that they do not wish to ballot. The reason for not balloting appears to be connected with the trade unions wanting a greater level of back pay and also that signing up to a collective agreement could in the trade unions' view leave themselves open to litigation.
4. In terms of the equal pay claims, 5 days of equal pay tribunal hearings took place in mid-June. Jurisdictional issues were resolved and a further hearing of 1 day is due on 1st October 2010.
5. The Department is currently working on a number of projects connected to defending the equal pay cases in a number of jurisdictions.
6. Discussions are taking place with regard to the appeal process within the Authority, schools and also VA schools. Officers are having to manage a number of queries from schools as to implementation.

B. Establishment Control, Pensions, Payroll & HR Transactional Services

7. The Client meetings continue (now fortnightly) and we are progressing in several areas including the introduction of new process and improving data quality. Protocols continue to be developed as and when required.
8. The Establishment Control Panel has now become embedded and is working well. The Panel deal with everything which concerns the engagement of people to work within the Council. New processes/forms have been developed to streamline the process.
9. Establishment Control will be sending Workforce Data to all Service Directors on a regular basis. Staffing Data is currently sent to all schools on a termly basis.
10. The Pensions Officer is currently working closely with the Transformation team in providing redundancy/pension costs.
11. A requirements document has been produced and shared with arvato to implement the changes required to employee's pay for Pay & Grading on 1st October 2010. Files are currently being produced to change posts and employees for 1st October 2010.
12. In ResourceLink, My View Self Service has been piloted in Finance to give employees access to their own payslips on line. This will be rolled out across the Council, where employees have access to a Council PC.

C. Health Unit

13. The Corporate Manager post is still vacant and is likely to remain so until the current requirement for savings are met and any revised structures are implemented.

14. The Unit is currently reviewing its policy and guidance documents in line with the revised organisational structure of the Council. This may prove difficult to finalise as further changes are likely.
15. The Unit has provided a guide to the support services it can offer to those employees who have been issued with notice of redundancy. It will also be made available to any employee who is subject to this in future.
16. The Unit continues to play a pivotal role in the new EVOLVE (school trip database) system trial. This is due to end at the end of September when the system will be rolled out across the remainder of the Council and to those schools which choose to use it.
17. The Unit is due to trial its new Incident Reporting System in Operational Services until December 2010. Provided there are no serious problems the system will then be rolled out across the remainder of the Council and to schools.
18. Great progress has been made with co-ordinating the Premises Condition Managers Training. (This will enable identified Officers sufficient awareness and understanding to ensure compliance with the Council's Legionella and Asbestos Management Plans as well as other statutory obligations). The courses are ready, the Unit just need the authority to commence.
19. The Unit will work closely with Client Team (Env P&Tech) and Capita Symonds to address the requirements of statutory testing obligations as set out in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Given current budgetary constraints there will need to be a level of priority attached to these.

D. **Corporate Learning & Development Unit**

20. Mainstream CLDU activity remains focused primarily on the identified and agreed priorities of rolling out the Coaching Skills for Managers training programmed and ongoing maintenance of the Management Development and Foundation to Management programmers. Of the 54 Coaching Skills for Managers events planned between April 2010 and the end of 2011, 9 are now complete and 12 others underway. Feedback to date from delegates has been very positive. The programmes are being run jointly by trainers from CLDU and the Social Care and Wellbeing workforce development team, producing spin-off benefits in terms of relationship building between the team.

FINANCE & INFORMATION SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Finance/Budget

The audit of the Accounts for 2009/10 has largely been completed by PriceWaterhouseCooper's. It is anticipated that they will be issuing an unqualified opinion on the Accounts to the Audit and Governance Committee on 30 September.

Routine work in monitoring the 2010/11 budget is progressing (report included elsewhere on the agenda) together with the completion of the transfer of certain functions between Directorates as a result of the Strategic Budget Review and the Transformation Agenda. The section is continuing to provide support in the search for the savings and efficiencies

necessary to deliver a balanced budget in the 2011/12 to 2013/14 Medium Term Financial Plan.

The consultation process to ensure the first stage integration of financial support staff from Children's Services, Social Care and Wellbeing and the Chief Executive's and Communities Business Support Unit with Corporate Financial Management is now complete. The initial phase of the integration will start on 1 October, when finance staff from the departments referred to above will transfer to the management of the Corporate Finance & Information Services Department. The second stage of the process to deliver improved and consistent support to departments and more timely monitoring and reporting to budget holders and Members is already underway; the process will gain pace over the next couple of months, in order to meet the implementation date of 1 April 2011.

Client Unit

ICT

The audit of compliance against the Government Connect Code of Connection has been passed. There are still some tasks to be undertaken but based on the existing plans the audit was successfully completed.

The conversion of the Council's mail system is underway and almost all staff based in Bootle are using the Microsoft Outlook email system.

Blackberrys have now been introduced for those staff who need access to email whilst mobile.

Customer Services – The Corporate Strategy for Customer Access is currently being developed as part of the Council's Transformation Programme... arvato are playing a major part in the development of this strategy.

HR and Payroll – The requirements for the implementation of job evaluation continue to be developed and will be in place for 01st October 2010.

Revenues & Benefits -

The new Revenues & Benefits core processing system project remains on target for November go live. A separate report will be submitted to Cabinet Member for Corporate Services Meeting on 13th October with a detailed update. 1300 newsletters have been distributed to private landlords to update them on the Benefits service. Also the benefit Take Up Officer has attended multi agency information & advice events for victims of the recent Bootle flooding.

Accounts Payable – the service continue to process payment requests within an average of one day when received. The service has put measures in place to ensure fraudulent requests to change bank account details of supplier are not actioned. This is a scam that has been identified by the National Anti-fraud network.

Procurement

Following the re-launch of the I-Procurement software facility through Q1 of the current financial year, the extent of spend being processed through the facility has subsequently

increased from around 7% to over 35% of addressable spend as at the end of July 2010. Work continues in terms of delivering staff training and managing the ongoing transition.

The Corporate Procurement Unit has recently implemented a new contract for Office Stationery, which will result in savings of circa £140,000 per annum. This exercise was undertaken in collaboration with all other Merseyside authorities.

One of the key projects under the Transformation Programme is the 'Procurement and Commissioning' review, which is designed to deliver efficiencies through enabling a more corporate approach to all procurement and commissioning activity. CPU is currently heavily involved on this project.

Insurance & Administration

Following a successful tender exercise, the contract for the Insurance Broker's contract with Aon Limited was renewed in April 2010, and the renewal of the insurance policies will be completed by 29th September 2010. A report on the savings achieved will be submitted to the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services in October. The staffing on the section has been reduced without detriment to the services provided.

In addition, the "Members' Allowances - Notes for Guidance" document will be distributed to all Members before the end of September.

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES DEPARTMENT – ACE

COMMITTEE AND MEMBER SERVICES

In addition to the administrative support provided for various Cabinet / Committee meetings, the Section has supported the following:

School Admission Appeals

During the period from 24 July to 16 September 2010, 4 School Admission appeal hearings were organised and held, involving 34 applications in respect of 6 High Schools and 11 Primary Schools. The hearings were clerked by the Section with assistance from the Legal Team.

Members' ICT Issues

David Cook, the Members ICT Support Officer transferred to Arvato Government Services with effect from 1 September 2010 and he is now based in St Peter's House, Balliol House, Bootle.

Members may contact David via the ICT Help Desk on 0151-934-4999. He will continue to be available to meet Members at either Bootle or Southport Town Halls or at their homes if so required. In the absence of David, the Help Desk will direct any enquiries from Members to another Desk Top Engineer for the matter to be dealt with.

CIVIC & MAYORAL SERVICES

Twinning and Cultural Links

As part of the Head of Civic & Mayoral Services twinning responsibilities, visits were arranged and facilitated as part of the Twinning Business Plans currently in place. In July the Council welcomed a Children's Delegation to Sefton from Pafos. The Children took part in a music concert at St Faith's Church in Crosby with Sefton School's Music Service and Lydiate Primary School. The concert was very well attended and received by the audience.

On Saturday the Pafos Delegation performed an outdoor concert at the Bandstand in Southport as part of Lord Street Celebrates.

In July a Mayoral delegation attended Pafos for the Twinning Ceremony which Pafos were taking part in and a Music Concert.

In September, a delegation of Stilt Walkers from Gdansk attended Sefton and were greeted by the Mayor at the International Day Festival, held in Southport on the 12th September.

Mayoral

The following receptions have been held and facilitated by the Mayor's Office:

Charity Committee Reception
Multi Faith Reception.

The Head of Civic & Mayoral Services and the Mayoral Officer attended a workshop in Manchester at the Imperial War Museum, which was run by the Holocaust Memorial Trust. The workshop was held to discuss best practice and the launch the 2011 theme which is titled "Untold Stories". It is the intention that we will be working with schools and community groups to widen the awareness of the Holocaust on the lead up to the 27th January 2011.

Sefton Council were praised at the regional workshop event as being proactive in new approaches to the national event and the booklet that was produced for last year's memorial service "legacy of Hope"

Civic & Mayoral Services

The majority of our front line staff have recently completed the customer service course "Welcome to Excellence" which is part of our commitment to improving the customer experience at all our Civic & Mayoral Services venues.

ELECTORAL SERVICES

The Electoral Services team have now started the annual canvass for the 2011 Register of Electors, registration forms have now been sent to all residential properties and reminder forms will be sent out at the beginning of October.

The team are also starting to plan for the Borough and Parish Elections on the 5 May 2011 along with the proposal to hold a Referendum on the future of voting at Parliamentary Elections.