

## **CABINET – 25<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER, 2010**

### **CABINET MEMBER - CORPORATE SERVICES**

#### **CORPORATE LEGAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT**

On 21st September Corporate Legal Services hosted the Annual General Meeting of the North Western and North Wales Branch of Solicitors in Local Government and on the same day hosted two Special Interest Group meetings relating to education and outsourcing.

As a founder member of the North West Legal Consortium we were involved in the organisation of its first annual conference which took place at the Leigh Sports Village on 12 October. The key note speaker was Baroness Hanham CBE, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Communities and Local Government. The event provided three free training sessions and an opportunity to network with colleagues throughout the North West.

A working group to review the constitution has been established and the first meeting of officers and members will take place on 30<sup>th</sup> November.

A 'task and finish' group of officers and members has been set up to consider the implications of the Bribery Act 2010 for the authority and a date for its first meeting will be set before the end of November.

We recently advised Lydiat Parish Council and the Trustees of the John Goore Charity on the rules relating to the appointment of trustees which involved the interpretation of deeds dated 1863 and 1913.

We have also been successful in the following prosecutions:

Dog control orders –

- ❖ dog wardens investigated a complaint of an attack by a labrador in the Kew area of Southport. The dog owner and person in charge were interviewed and admitted the dog had been out of control. The court ordered that the dog be kept under proper control and muzzled when in a public place. The court also ordered that the Defendant pay the complainant £50 compensation and SMBC £500 in costs.
- ❖ another case concerned the Defendant's failure to comply with a dog control order. Despite an order being made that the Defendant keep her dog muzzled and on a lead in a public place and for the dog to be neutered she had failed to comply and another dog was attacked whilst the Defendant's dog was off its lead. The Defendant was ordered to pay a fine of £115 plus costs of £150. She also produced evidence from her vet confirming the dog had now been neutered.

Failure to comply with Building Regulations (8 counts) - the Defendant is a property developer. Summonses were issued and as a result the defendant agreed to rectify the breaches. As all work was carried out to the satisfaction of Building Control and the

residents, the summonses were withdrawn upon the Defendant paying the Council's costs of £1500.

Multiple occupancy - this case concerned the management of a House in Multiple Occupation without the requisite licence and also the failure to produce an electrical safety certificate. The defendant entered a not guilty plea and the matter proceeded to a trial over 2 half days. The court found the Defendant guilty of both offences and ordered that he pay a fine of £6,000 in relation to the offence of failing to have a HMO licence, £2,000 for failing to produce electrical certificate and £2,000 costs.

Taxi Offence - this case concerned the offences of plying for hire and driving without insurance. Taxi driver caught on a test purchase operation. Entered a guilty plea, fined £100 re plying for hire, £150 no insurance and 6 penalty points.

## **FINANCE & INFORMATION SERVICES DEPARTMENT**

### **Finance / Budget**

Work is ongoing across the Department in support of the data gathering exercise in support of the drive to identify opportunities for budget savings. The Department is supporting the Chief Executive and Directorates throughout this process.

### **Client Unit**

#### **ICT**

A new simple email system for councillors has been designed and is due to be available by the end of November 2010. Councillors email addresses will change but they will not need council owned equipment to access it.

The conversion of the email system to Microsoft Outlook is nearing completion and has been mainly successful. The exception has been some technical faults in the week commencing 1<sup>st</sup> November which caused intermittent service interruptions.

A change in key personnel roles and responsibilities in arvato has resulted in Jan Wemmel concentrating more on his corporate arvato role and the development of transformation and change activities. David Davies has been promoted and is now the Head of ICT Operational Services.

**Customer Services** – ATM payment machines have been installed in each One Stop Shop, and are now fully operational.

**HR and Payroll** – The changes resulting from job evaluation were implemented as agreed for payday in October. Work has started on the rollout of MyView. This is an online module for the payroll system, it will eventually replace paper payslips for many, but not all employees. It will also allow the online submission of claims, reducing the need for paper forms.

### **Revenues & Benefits -**

The new Northgate Revenues & Benefits core processing system is forecast to be in live operation by 17<sup>th</sup> November go live. Following the closedown of the Pericles system on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2010, measures are being taken to ensure customers experience minimum disruption whilst a temporarily reduced service is in operation, There is currently no on-line processing facility and limited account information available. A press release has

been issued and information placed on Sefton's website which provides information. Customers who have any concerns during this period have been encouraged to contact the One Stop Shops or the Contact Centre.

### **Procurement**

The 'Procurement and Commissioning' review, under the umbrella of the Transformation programme, continues to progress. The project is targeted with making savings of £1,000,000 in financial year 2011/12. To date benefits realised across a number of category areas exceed £300,000. Information continues to be gathered within some of the key spend areas such as Childrens Schools and Families, and Health and Well Being (Adults). This is expected to lead to potential opportunities with regards to re-tendering in key areas, and collaborating with partner organisations where appropriate.

To compliment the ongoing review, it is recognised that relevant commissioning and procurement training needs to be delivered across the authority. In this respect a project team has been established to oversee the delivery of a comprehensive commissioning training programme. This is scheduled to take place through December/January, within the current financial year.

### **Insurance & Administration**

Following a successful tender exercise in conjunction with the Council's Insurance Brokers, Aon Limited, the Council's insurance policies were renewed on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2010 at a saving of £169,500. A more detailed report on the savings achieved will also be submitted to the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services in November.2010 The staffing on the section has been reduced without detriment to the services provided.

In addition, the "Members' Allowances - Notes for Guidance" document was distributed to all Members at the end of September 2010.

### **Internal Audit**

The review and re-structure of Internal Audit is now complete, the Acting Chief Internal Auditor has now been appointed as permanent and all other posts have been filled from within existing resources. The Section has reduced its establishment from 16 to 12 posts, this has achieved a saving of circa £100,000 in this financial year. The reduction of posts has taken into account the removal of the requirement to undertake audit in those areas provided by the arvato and Capita Symonds contracts, however, the section still reserve the right to undertake work in these areas if requested by the Client Team.

The methodology for conducting and reporting audits, the reports to Audit & Governance and a move towards risk based auditing will now be developed.

## **DEMOCRATIC SERVICES DEPARTMENT – ACE**

### **COMMITTEE AND MEMBER SERVICES**

The Team has provided administrative support for various Cabinet / Committee / Working Group Meetings and general assistance to Members of the Council.

During the period from 17 September to 10 November 2010, the Section has also organised and clerked 4 School Admission appeal hearings, involving 30 applications in respect of 5 High Schools and 9 Primary Schools.

## **ELECTORAL SERVICES**

The Electoral Services team are entering the final stage of the annual canvass for the 2011 Register of Electors, which will be published on the 1 December 2010. Preparations are under way for the Local Government and Parish Council Elections next May. The elections will be combined with the Referendum on future voting arrangements at Parliamentary elections as required by the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Bill 2010-11.

The Bill provides for the next General Election to be held under the Alternative Vote system, provided this change is endorsed in a referendum on 5 May 2011 and boundary changes have been made to reduce the size of the House of Commons to 600. The Bill also creates new rules for the redistribution of seats which will require 600 constituencies in the Commons rather than the current 650. The rules will give priority to numerical equality as a principle, in that there will be a uniform electoral quota for the UK, and seats may not vary by more than 5 per cent from the quota, with some limited exceptions. Regular redistributions would take place every five years. The Parliamentary Boundary Commissions are to conduct a review by the end of September 2013 with subsequent reviews every five years.

## **OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY**

An action plan has been agreed by the Management Board, following the Away Day held in June 2010. This action plan has been circulated to all Members of the Council, and will be considered by all Overview and Scrutiny Committees. There are specific actions to strengthen the policy development role of Members, through the building of relationships with Cabinet Members and Departments. The Health Inequalities Working Group is nearing completion and a final report is expected by the end of December. This work has been part of a national project and has been publicised as a case study for the Centre for Public Scrutiny. Other Working Groups are ongoing, and the Performance and Corporate Services Committee have recently agreed to establish a 'Task and Finish Group' to focus on the Bribery Act and the implications for Members. The Committees are adopting varying methods of scrutiny and these have included Task and Finish Groups, mini-reviews, single item meetings as well as identifying detailed Working Group Reviews.