

CABINET – 3RD MARCH, 2011

CORPORATE SERVICES – CABINET MEMBERS' REPORT

CORPORATE LEGAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Our Children & Social Care Team provided advanced legal update training to Team and Resource Managers in Children's Services. This training provided an update upon the developments in child care law in the areas of evidential burden and the 'threshold criteria' with a particular focus on the risks posed by those who have physically harmed children in the past, as well as setting out good practice requirements recently set out by the court when assessing adults with learning disabilities and when working with parents who are the victims of domestic violence.

Quarterly liaison meetings take place with representatives from both the Legal and Children's Services Departments. The most recent meeting considered topics aimed at increasing efficiencies in both services and to promote the already close working relationships between the departments. Matters of particular interest include the status of Regulation 38 placements of children with family/ friends, legal input into training and quality assurance, consideration of children at home under Care Orders and changes in the personnel with management responsibilities for CAFCASS.

Following the planning approval and funding approval for the Thornton-Switch Island Link Road, we are currently working on the draft Compulsory Purchase Order and Side Roads Order that are necessary to take the project forward.

We are also working on a Funding Agreement with the Homes and Communities Agency for the purchase of properties in the Housing Market Renewal Area up to a value of £1 million.

We recently provided Licensing training for members, which was very well received by members who attended.

Finally, we instructed Queens Counsel in respect of a Judicial Review Application to the High Court in respect of a planning permission granted by the Council. Unfortunately, the Judge found against the Council and the planning permission was quashed. The Judge has reserved judgment on the issue of costs.

PERSONNEL DEPARTMENT

Establishment Control, Pensions, Payroll & HR Transactional Services

1. 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.

2. 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.
3. 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.
4. The Pensions Officer is currently working closely with the Transformation team and Personnel Officers in providing redundancy/pension costs.
5. In ResourceLink, access to My View Self Service has now been given to Finance Personnel staff and a plan is being developed to roll it out across the Council, where employees have access to a Council PC.

Health Unit

6. 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.
7. The trial of the new Incident Reporting System is now complete and rollout into departments has commenced. As the system is relatively easy to use no formal training has been offered. Instead users are being issued with a PDF training document which should enable easy accessibility and start up. However staff from the Health Unit will be available for further advice, guidance and potentially short briefing sessions wherever necessary. Introduction of the new system should enable statistics to be more readily available as well as easier and less time consuming to produce.
8. Premises Condition Managers Training has now commenced and the first course held on 25 January was both well attended and received. A further three courses have been scheduled during February and March. As the level of interest for courses has been quite high a waiting list has been set up to enable future courses to be organized as soon as there are sufficient candidates.
9. Arvato has approached the Health unit to undertake Stress Audits within three areas of its local office. Although these will be quite time consuming there is sufficient scope within the current SLA to cover these.
10. The Health Unit is currently reviewing its Audit procedure in an attempt to both simplify the existing arrangements and explore the introduction of a Stage 1 and Stage 2 approach. Effectively this would allow more audits to be undertaken across a larger number of area/locations albeit in less depth. This system would also indicate where Stage 2 (more in depth) audits would be needed, where not previously suggested in the Corporate Forum Annual Plan.

Corporate Learning & Development Unit

11. Mainstream CLDU activity remains focused primarily on the identified and agreed priorities of rolling out the Coaching Skills for Managers training programme, further roll-out of the Coaching Strategy and ongoing maintenance of the Management Development and Foundation to Management programme. Of the Coaching Skills for Managers events planned between April 2010 and the end of 2011, 24 are now complete and a further 18 are scheduled between

January – July 2011. The remainder, to cover the whole of the management and senior team leader population, will be scheduled for the second half of 2011.

12. Feedback to date from delegates remains 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. A presentation was given to the Strategic & Service Directors meeting on 7th January covering the Programme to date – key themes, both positives and challenges, and next steps. A full proposals discussion document has been prepared for Directors for the further roll-out of the Coaching Strategy. This will go to Directors for input following completion of the senior management review.
13. The corporate Management Development programme continues to run successfully. MDP12 concluded at the end of January with all participants graduating successfully to achieve either their ILM Level 5 Certificate in Leadership or their ILM Endorsed Award. The next programme, MDP 17, also began in January.
14. As part of Workforce Planning CLDU have supported staff who are at risk of redundancy by bringing together a range of agencies such as Job Centre Plus, Nextstep, Sefton @ Work, Adult and Community Learning, Hugh Baird College and Asset Training. The session took place on Friday 7th January, 33 people attended.
15. Activity has taken place with Cleansing to promote Work Based Learning. It has been identified that 62 employees will complete an NVQ Level 2 in Waste Management and 58 employees will complete an NVQ Level 2 in Cleaning and Support Services. This will be a rolling programme from February – July 2011 which will be funded by Myerscough College and Asset Training and Consultancy.

FINANCE & INFORMATION SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Financial Management :-

The section has been closely involved in preparing the budget in the light of decisions made by Cabinet and Council and revising the capital programme. Staff have been liaising with service managers to realign budgets based upon the decisions made to date in accordance with the Council's agreed priorities (critical, frontline, regulatory, tiers 1 and 2 services) for input into the Oracle Financial Management Information System. The following activities are currently in progress:

- Service Level Agreements with schools continue to be reviewed
- The review of the use of the Oracle Financial System continues, supported by arvato
- The Finance Integration project is being reviewed in the light of the Council's new senior management structure
- Margaret Rawding, the new Head of Corporate Finance & ICT, is due to take up her post on 1 March.
- Work and processes for finalising the 2010/11 accounts have commenced.

Client Unit (Management of arvato contract) :-

A joint review of the arvato contract is underway and areas for potential savings have been identified.

ICT :-

A new simple email system for Councillors has been built and approximately 40 mailboxes of councillors have been converted. Convenient dates for the remainder of the conversions is awaited from individual Councillors.

The refresh of PC and telephony equipment, undertaken as part of the arvato contract, remains on hold for a period whilst decisions on the shape and size of the Council are finalised.

Proposals for a managed print service with Xerox is nearing completion; it is likely that we will enter into a five year contract for the provision of printer /copiers under a managed service that will deliver financial savings to the Council.

Customer Services :-

Service transition is on hold pending the Customer Strategy review. The pilot service for self serve is ready to go live following service approval, and the final technical implementation.

HR and Payroll : -

The Corporate Finance and IS department have now moved to electronic payslips. Personnel will move to electronic payslips in April. Work has started on the rollout of electronic payslips to appropriate staff across the authority.

Revenues & Benefits :-

The backlog of work created in the Benefits Service due to migration to the new core processing system is now on track to be cleared the end of February 2011. Processing for the Revenues Service is up to date.

New legislation for housing benefit/council tax benefit comes into force from April 2011. An action plan is now in place to cover many issues i.e. training and communication.

The proposed changes for the introduction of the Universal Credit and the localisation of council tax benefit is also being monitored to ensure the Council is well positioned to tackle the relevant changes; a communication plan is being prepared.

Creditors :-

The team continue to process requests for payments within 2 days of receipt and performance is well within targets.

Procurement :-

The procurement and commissioning review has resulted in the targeting of a number of initiatives, specifically within the areas of Children, Schools and Families and Adult Social Care. In respect of the former, Sefton is leading on a Merseyside-wide collaboration to implement a framework solution for the provision of 'Residential Care'.

In addition, a separate exercise is about to commence to put in place a similar solution regarding 'Leaving Care'. Both will improve risk management and deliver operational efficiencies.

The previous Head of Procurement left the employ of the Council in January 2011 and has been replaced by Brian Gibson, who has been involved in project management for a number of years and in particular on the Major Service Review.

Work has commenced within the procurement team to enhance further the I Proc system, introduce a Corporate Contract database system, to take on a regional spend analysis system and a regional estimating system.

Insurance & Administration :-

The Insurance Team working closely with Aon Limited, the Council's insurance Brokers, continue to successfully defend many of claims made against the Council. Despite the Section reducing its establishment from 10 to 7 posts , the team continue to meet deadlines and strive to reduce costs wherever possible.

The report on revisions to the Scheme of Members' Allowances is to be considered by the Council later this month, and work is underway on the information to be presented to the Independent Remuneration Panel in March 2011.

Internal Audit :-

Work is ongoing in regard to the development of a risk based approach to Internal Audit and the planning process. The quarterly monitoring report presented to the Audit & Governance Committee has been redeveloped to outline actual audits undertaken against those planned and approved at the beginning of the year. The report will be further refined to include actual time spent against that planned.

A Fraud Report is also now presented on a quarterly basis informing the Committee of any Investigations or fraud detection and prevention work undertaken by the section.

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES DEPARTMENT – ACE

COMMITTEE AND MEMBER SERVICES

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

During the period from 13 January to 15 February 2011, the Section has also organised and clerked 2 School Admission appeal hearings, involving 6 applications in respect of 4 High Schools and 1 Primary School.

Arrangements are being finalised for a School Admissions Appeals Training Session to be held on 25 February and School Exclusion Appeals Training Session to be held on 25 March 2011, both at Bootle Town Hall for Panel Members and staff who must have training on the appeals procedures every two years to comply with statutory guidance. Panel members and staff from Knowsley, Liverpool and St Helens have been invited to share the costs which will be met from the School Admissions Budget.

The proposals for Modernising Democratic Services, including the draft Programme of Meetings for 2011/12 have been produced and appear as a separate item on the agenda for this meeting and the Council meeting on 3 March 2011

ELECTORAL SERVICES

The Electoral Services team are now making all necessary arrangements for the local and parish council elections on Thursday 5 May 2011.

The proposed referendum on the UK Parliamentary voting system is still being considered by both houses of Parliament. In order for the referendum to be combined with the local elections, the Parliamentary Voting System and Constituencies Bill must receive Royal Assent by the 24 February 2011, however, due to Parliament recess, the Bill must be enacted by the 16 February 2011 to allow for the minimum referendum period of 10 weeks as set out in the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 to be in place.

Should the Bill not received Royal Assent in time, then the referendum must be held before the 31 October 2011.