

## **CABINET – 10 JUNE 2010**

### **CORPORATE SERVICES – CABINET MEMBERS' REPORT**

#### **LEGAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT**

##### **1. The Planning, Environmental and Property Team**

Recent/Current contracts that we are dealing with include:-

- Recycling Contract; Southport Food and Drink Festival; Lander Road Primary School alterations and extension; Insurance Broker Services; Rimrose Hope Primary School landscape works.

We are involved in a number of projects including:-

- Independent Learning Centre; Warranties for the Tannery Site; Southport Cultural Centre; the Thornton-Switch Island Link Road Planning Application; the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency in Housing Programme bid and the Carbon Reduction Scheme.

We have recently taken 10+ prosecutions for benefit fraud including:-

- 2 for Food Safety [Hot Food Takeaways] and 5 for taxi licensing offences.

We have also obtained a Control of Dogs Order.

#### **PERSONNEL DEPARTMENT**

##### **A. Pay & Grading Review/Equal Pay**

1. The process of implementing the outcome of the Pay and Grading Review for NJC employees is on target and grading notification letters were issued on 28<sup>th</sup> May. If it proves impossible to reach agreement with the Trade Unions over the new pay structure by mid June then it will become necessary to impose the new arrangements by serving the appropriate notice on employees. These letters are due to be issued on 18<sup>th</sup> June.
2. Consultation with the Trade Unions is continuing relative to proposed amendments to allowances and mitigation arrangements.
3. Witness statements have now been exchanged in readiness for the equal pay Tribunal hearings that start on 10th June.

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

4. The weekly Client meetings continue 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.
5. 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 are being developed to streamline the process.
6. The Transformation Team have been mapping the organisation and Establishment Control will be amending the Establishment held in ResourceLink accordingly. Once this exercise is complete 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.
7. The Pensions Officer is currently working closely with the policy team to develop pension policies.

## **C. Health Unit**

8. The Corporate H&S Manager retired at the end of March and has not as yet been replaced.
9. Management of sickness absence will continue to be monitored by the Sickness Absence Panel which meets quarterly and is chaired by the Chief Executive. It was agreed at the last meeting on 17th May that all Service Directors whose Department's sickness absence levels rose above the Council's target level for short and long term absence will be invited to the next panel meeting.
10. The Corporate H&S forum reviewed the Health Unit's work plan for the year ahead. Amendments have been made to the time scales and the items prioritised to ensure significant risks are addressed and any slippage properly accounted for.

## **FINANCE & INFORMATION SERVICES DEPARTMENT**

### **Budget Issues**

The closure of the Accounts process for 2009/10 is continuing; the outturn position compared to the budget will be finalised in June.

The project to integrate financial services across all Departments is now underway. The subsequent introduction of the new structure will enable a more efficient provision of services and the achievement of the financial savings identified in the budget.

### **Client Unit (comments by LP)**

**ICT** – The relocation of the Data Centre from Balliol House to St. Peter's House has now completed except for 2 remaining transfers to be undertaken by 3<sup>rd</sup> party suppliers. The relocation exercise was complex in the extreme and the council lost only 1 hour of

business as a result. Arvato are to be congratulated on the success of this key project. The conversion from Novell Groupwise to Microsoft

**Customer Services** – An Operational Group to develop the Customer Access strategy has been put in place and will meet on a regular basis.

**HR and Payroll** – Work continues in partnership with the Council to ensure our CRB checks are current. Electronic payslips will be introduced on a phased basis with the Finance and IS Department as phase 1 in July 2010.

**Revenues & Benefits** – Implementation work for the new Revenues and Benefits system is ongoing with the live operational date planned as October 2010. The contract with Northgate Information Solutions is now signed and the project is fully underway.

Council tax and Business Rates collection targets have been achieved.

### **Procurement**

Recent work has concentrated on ensuring as much supplier spend as possible is processed through the councils internal electronic I-Procurement system, to ensure access to best value corporate contracts and achieve transparency of spend corporately. Further, a series of meetings have taken place with senior officers within Adult Health and Social Care and Childrens Services departments to agree implementation of robust processes, which will ensure corporate support is provided by the procurement unit to support contracting activity in these key areas. Further work in these areas will continue to progress over the next few months. The Procurement Project board, established in January 2010, has identified key areas of spend to target future efficiencies. Discussions will take place with relevant service directors over the next month on how these actions are taken forward. Discussions are also scheduled to take place imminently with the council's service partner, arvato, to agree a strategy to ensure that the most efficient use is made of existing procurement software solutions.

## **DEMOCRATIC SERVICES DEPARTMENT**

### **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 1 April to 25 May 2010, 5 School Admission appeal hearings were held over 7 days (5 High Schools and 2 Primary Schools) involving 42 applications and 7 late withdrawals of applications. The hearings were clerked by the Section.

#### **Members' ICT Issues**

During the period from 1 April 2010 to 25 May 2010, the Members' ICT Support Officer has provided training on 7 IT issues to 1 Councillor and dealt with 83 requests for IT support from Councillors, including the newly Members.

#### **Members Induction 2010**

For the first time, letters were sent on 27 April 2010 to all of the Candidates standing in the Local Government Elections 2010, advising them of the arrangements for signing the

Declaration of Acceptance of Office if they were elected to office and the details of the Member Induction Programme for 2010.

The candidates were requested upon election to office, to contact the Members Information Officer to make arrangements for a one-to-one session during the first week after the Elections, in order to receive their own Induction Pack, complete some of the routine paperwork and discuss their participation in the Induction Programme.

Eight new Councillors were elected and they have all had a one-to-one session with the Members Information Officer or Head of Committee and Member Services.

### **Appointment of Cabinet and Committees' / Outside Bodies Representation**

Following the Count for Local Government Elections held on 7 May, the Section liaised with the three Political Group Leaders on the revised proportionality for the allocation of committee seats for 2010/11 and the proposed membership of the Cabinet and Committees etc prior to the Council Meeting on 13 May 2010.

The details of the nominations for the Council's representation on Outside Bodies was compiled and submitted to the Cabinet on 20 May

The revised memberships of the Cabinet and Committees, representation on Outside Bodies and the contact details for the eight new Members have been updated on the 'Modern.gov' Committee Management System and published on the Council website / Intranet.

## **CIVIC & MAYORAL SERVICES**

### **Civic Operations**

In April, the main desk at Bootle Town Hall was replaced with a more substantial reception desk. The desk was obtained from Southport Arts Centre. The desk has now allowed for a more customer focused approach to visitors and staff.

Security has also been improved at Bootle Town Hall with the introduction of Visitor Badges to all visitors attending meetings and offices and staff visiting Bootle Town Hall without SMBC Badges. The scheme has been launched to improve security so visitors can be identified and a more effective fire evacuation can take place.

May was a busy time with the Elections as Civic & Mayoral Services staff were drafted in on the day of the election for set ups and then on the evening and over night, with the addition of the count on Friday. This created a challenge for staffing as cover had to be provided over a two day period, but our staff responded to the challenge and gave operational cover at Bootle and Southport Town Hall.

Room Bookings has also started to promote itself at Bootle and Southport Town Hall by producing eye catching "pop up" banners that advertise our facilities to potential external users.

Further work has also taken place on the civic and Mayoral Services web pages with the addition of more Twinning information, Flag Protocol and more updated images. Visit [www.sefton.gov.uk/civicanmayoralservices](http://www.sefton.gov.uk/civicanmayoralservices)

### **Mayoral**

May has been a busy time with the change over of the Mayoral Year from Councillor Doran to Councillor Fearn. The Mayoral Installation Ceremony and Installation Dinner

took place in May and is a substantial planning exercise. Work now begins on the Mayoral Theme and the major Civic Engagements we arrange on behalf of the Mayor.

Civic & Mayoral Services (Head of Civic & Mayoral Services) attended a Polish Community event, organised by Sefton Equalities Partnership at the Plaza Cinema in May, which saw the showcase of Polish Childrens art work and stories and the showing of short animation films taken from the art work.

### **Twinning**

A delegation for our Twin Town Mons attended Sefton in April. The event was a success, which saw the delegation visit Bootle Town Hall, attend a Twinning Business Plan meeting, which saw a plan being drawn up for the next five years. The plan looks at how the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Battle of Mons will be celebrated along with the 50th Anniversary of Twinning between Sefton and Mons in 2014, the facilitation of visits, Web coverage and Capital of Culture 2015. The delegation also visited the new Lakeside Watersports Centre and attended a meeting to look at how Sefton worked alongside events for the Liverpool Capital of Culture.

The end of the visit also saw the visit to the Cenotaph at Bootle and the laying of wreaths at the Cenotaph in Southport and short wreath laying ceremony at a short memorial service for the death of the Polish President.

### **Overview and Scrutiny**

Invitations have been circulated to all Members of the Council to attend an Overview & Scrutiny Away Day on Monday 21st June. This event will provide Members with an update of the Council's prioritisation exercise and discuss the impact this will have upon how the function of overview & scrutiny currently operates. Members will also be provided with an update of how the Member Working Group is progressing with the review of Health Inequalities as part of the national programme. Sefton was one of nine successful bids selected across the country to participate in this national programme and the Working Group is receiving support from advisors from the Centre for Public Scrutiny.

The Annual Report 2009-10 for Overview & Scrutiny will be available in a few weeks and published on the website for information.

### **Electoral Services**

The Electoral Services Team is in the process of clearing up after the elections and preparing for future elections. Many issues have come to light as a result of problems around the country on election day. These matters are being dealt with at various election de-briefing sessions with Electoral Administrators, The Electoral Commission and the Ministry of Justice. A full report on the elections in Sefton will go to Overview and Scrutiny in the Autumn.

### **Coroner's support**

The Coroner's has recently presided over 2 weeks of Jury Inquests where 5 Inquests were heard.

### **Land Charges**

There are still unresolved legal issues around land charges and further advice is awaited. The suspension of HIPs may lead to an increase in land search enquiries.