

Overview and Scrutiny Committee for Resources Agenda

Wednesday, 18 November 2015 at 6.00 pm

Committee Room 1, Town Hall, Queen's Square, Priory Meadow, Hastings TN34 1QR

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| | | Page No. |
|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| 4. | Quarter Two Performance and Financial Monitoring Report (Jane Hartnell, Director of Corporate Services and Governance) | 1 - 4 |

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Agenda Item 4

Introduction

1. The piloting of new performance reporting arrangements includes the use of Director's overview reports to highlight exceptions in performance to assist Scrutiny to undertake its role. Detailed updates against Corporate Plan targets are attached, but attention is drawn to areas included in this report which details where performance is either challenged, exceeds expectation or to describe significant areas of work which were not identified when the Corporate Plan was drafted.
2. The aim is to ensure the areas of performance that are of a high level of interest or are mission critical will be given more time and attention. This approach may assist members to identify areas where they wish to understand more detail and therefore colleagues can be invited to future meetings for a more in-depth discussion.

Quarter 2 Performance and Issues Arising

3. As in quarter 1, although performance across the Directorate is mainly Green or Amber, staffing issues and impact of accommodation changes have been a major factor.

Legal Services

4. The absence of long term sick leave of a member of the team continues to have an impact. Some work has now had to be externalised, but colleagues have also taken on additional responsibilities and some temporary support is being sought as a stop gap.
5. Levels of legal support around contentious planning issues continues to be high, as well as the need for responses to Freedom of Information requests in this area. Other areas of significant work include preparing leases for the council's accommodation changes e.g. Town Hall and SEAP and the Social Letting's agency.

Community Contact Centre

6. Significant progress has been made in reducing the telephone wait times by half compared to last year. With similar staff numbers and call volumes the call rate has also increased from 81% to 88%. This has been achieved by improved performance of the Customer Service Officers through a combination of monitoring, training and development.
7. The new cohort of CSOs are performing well and are shortly going to be trained to take on additional call areas (we had prioritised Revenues and Benefits) which should further improve performance levels. Two of the CCC Team Leaders have been especially key to the Firmstep Project as these colleagues have been seconded to work with IT and service departments and for developing the new customer journey maps and associated process 'forms' which the software systems use to deliver customer transactions.

Audit and Procurement

8. A new Group Auditor has been appointed to fill the vacancy following the retirement of a senior colleague. The services of an external firm have been sought to discharge 2 core audits on the audit plan to cover the capacity issues that have arisen from this vacancy. The Housing Subsidy Grant Audit is nearing completion with only minimal issues identified.
9. The East Sussex Procurement Hub is satisfactorily covering the loss of their Procurement Adviser, and expected service for us has so far been unaffected. However after two rounds of recruitment, the Hub has not yet found a replacement. Consideration is being given to employing a consultant, but of course the concern for us is that it takes considerable time to get to know an organisation and its officers, processes etc. This situation is being kept under review.

Financial Services

10. The three new financial services staff have completed their induction and are settling in well into their new roles. These colleagues are crucial to have in place, as they will support the organisation through the forthcoming budget round and assist colleagues with financial information for project planning and delivery.
11. The key issues for the next quarter are the detail within the Autumn Statement and local government settlement which will play a large part in determining the level of resources available for next year and the years beyond. The local government settlement may not be received until just before Christmas Eve if past experience is anything to go on. The announcement around business rates and Councils retaining 100% of these after 2020 lacks detail - the devil will be in that detail and we will need to await it before being able to advise on the implications for Hastings.

Revenues and Benefits

12. The Change of Circumstances target is not currently being met. New ways of work allocations to teams will be piloted over the next month and the outcome will inform the processes for the remainder of the year.
13. Additional time is being spent on Supported/Exempt accommodation cases, particularly at Team Leader level, these are cases which are becoming contentious and creating additional work.
14. Additional pressures were placed on the service this quarter as a result of the disruption of the move back to Aquila House and the installation of two new servers which has taken up a considerable amount of time and resources. Extensive testing has been undertaken and a go live date of 7/8 November is planned.

Personnel and Business Support

15. The POD/Business Support team have played a significant role in the delivery of the accommodation changes within Aquila House etc. and many of the more junior staff extended their working days considerably to ensure the impact on day to day operations has been minimised.
16. The team managed 17 recruitment campaigns leading to the employment of 48 new staff in quarter two.
17. There has been an increase in short term absences for a variety of ailments. Data has shown this is under the following generic headings:
 - i. Stomach, liver, kidney;
 - ii. muscular skeletal;
 - iii. stress, depression, mental (none were work related);
 - iv. infections
18. Long term sickness falls under neurological and other categories. Sickness absence continues to be robustly managed and each case is dealt with on its own merits. A number of viruses have been affecting colleagues across the organisation, but further analysis is being undertaken to assess if there are any other trends.

Transformation Programme

19. Despite the brilliant work undertaken by the staff involved across HBC in the Firmstep Implementation Team, delays have occurred in the roll out of a seamless on-line reporting service through My Hastings due to issues with contractors (e.g. Kier/The Landscape Group TLG) these are being addressed through a combination of process redesign and technical support to TLG.
20. The use of the test system for waste reporting and some other functions has however seen a 20% take up by the public, without any publicity or launch process – this is very encouraging, and demonstrates the potential for significant channel shift for many of our transactional services.

Accommodation Project

21. With fantastic support of IT, Business Support and a number of other colleagues we successfully moved almost 200 staff in a two day period into the newly refurbished office floors in Aquila House. This required moving and setting up the IT for each workstation as well as maintaining the network.
22. The majority of staff are adapting to new ways of working relatively quickly, however the on-going refurbishment works to the building is not providing the ideal work environment in terms of noise and light and air flow restrictions.

23. There are further issues to be managed as the landlords works are completed, e.g. when the antiquated heating system is turned on in the winter, there is a risk of it not performing well – their decision not to invest in this may prove short-sighted.

Jane Hartnell, October 2015