

Director's Performance Overview



Subject: **Overview of 2015/16 quarter 3 performance – Corporate Services and Governance**

Submitted to: Overview and Scrutiny Committee for Resources

Date: 11 February 2016

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Introduction

1. My overview of exceptions in performance this quarter includes reference to service areas and issues that impact corporately across the whole organisation. As we are now accustomed, detailed feedback on progress against individual commitments in the 2015/16 Corporate Plan are appended for Members information. Lead Members will be familiar with the more detailed issues and where necessary follow up information will be discussed at 1:1 meetings.

Quarter 2 – Service performance and issues arising

2. Performance across the Directorate is mainly Green (19), with three targets marked as Amber and 1 Red.
3. Performance Indicators – 6 out of 8 PIs have not been met this quarter – explanations are given below.
4. Service specific issues:
 - **People and Business Support** – the ongoing additional workload associated with the accommodation refurbishment, transfer of functions from the Town Hall, and liaison with ESCC over their TH refurbishment project, is certainly putting strain on the very small, predominately part-time Business Support Staff. They are performing very well in the circumstances and are also implementing new technologies and systems which will help the organisation work more efficiently e.g. the Condeco room and desk booking system, as well as participating in business mapping processes to minimise levels of paper and mailings we send out as an organisation. The role of facilities management and functions expected of the team are being reviewed to match resources and capacity with increasing demands.

The level of recruitment activity continues to be high and the level of staff employed in January 2015 is now the same number as those employed in January 2016, albeit in different posts.

- **Contact Centre** – whilst good progress is being made in meeting customer demand – the team’s busiest time of year is coming up in March/April and planning is underway to minimise the impact on the service and other customers during this extremely busy time. The support of members and colleagues at this time is crucial.
- **Finance and Accountancy** – budget preparation has been made more challenging this year as a result of significant changes and delayed announcements of funding streams. The ‘bedding in’ of four new colleagues has also meant this is more of a challenge that we would have liked.

All Council’s will be required to close down their 2017/18 accounts by end June 2018 (as opposed to September) this significant reduction in timescales is being prepared for with a ‘practice run’ this year and next, which is adding to workload pressures.

- **Electoral Services** – following on from the significant workload arising from the completion of the transfer to the Individual Electoral Registration IER system, the team are preparing for the combined elections of local and Police and Crime Commissioner elections in May. The PCC elections use a different voting system and are overseen by the Police Area Returning Officer – both of which add an additional layer of complexity and more planning/liaison activity. The team are also pre-planning for the potential of the EU Referendum being called for any of the Thursday’s in June 2016 or indeed any time in the following 18 months.
- **Revenues and Benefits** – Although a number of collection and performance targets are not currently being met, these are expected to be achieved by year end, once the impact of extended payment periods is accounted for. Business rate appeals continue to cause concern both for backdated payments and the impact on future income streams – a major claim has been received for mandatory relief from the NHS. This impacts not only on the financial position but also the workload of staff having to calculate complex payments due over many years.

Corporate Issues

- a) Management of sickness absence continue to be a challenge that HR senior address with managers. There has been an increase in short term absences for a variety of ailments under the following generic headings: Stomach, liver, kidney; muscular skeletal; stress, depression, mental health (not work related); infections. Sickness absence continues to be robustly managed and each case is dealt with on its own merits.

Long term sick cases can become protracted as we have to take into consideration statutory guidance on handling of long term sick cases, Equality Act and precedents set by Employment Tribunals when deciding how to

progress a case. HR colleagues continue to question and challenge GP's or Consultant reports when applicable in order to resolve these cases.

- b) The level of Freedom of Information (FOI) requests and complaints from a number of individuals has necessitated the application of our Unreasonable and Unreasonably Persistent Complainers policy.
- c) Transformation Programme
 - 1) Work is continuing to address issues with implementing My Hastings with Firmstep and third parties to ensure a seamless on-line experience for reporting and transacting, and responding to user feedback. The priority area of focus is Selective Licensing.
 - 2) Business process mapping is continuing with service areas with the Transformation Team providing support, challenge and capacity to complete – it is acknowledged that it is a significant challenge for service areas to continue with the day job and undertake the review of processes and implementation of new ways of working.
 - 3) The appointment of the Customer First Communications Champion will enable significant progress to be undertaken with developing the communications strategy and roll out of key messages once agreed internally. This officer will also be key to facilitating the relaunch of the website shortly and continuing improvement to customer focussed communication.
 - 4) Work will continue into 2016/17 to identify and achieve efficiencies from Digital by Design and 'doing things differently' facilitated by new technology or working practices.
 - 5) Training is underway for key officers who will be using Mod Gov for report writing, prior to full launch shortly.
- d) Accommodation Project
 - 1) Work is progressing to complete the refurbishment of the upper ground floor of Aquila to create the new Chamber and Committee Rooms.
 - 2) ESCC have begun to operate out of the Town Hall following completion of their works.
 - 3) The issues with heating in Aquila House are to be addressed by some additional works which the landlords have committed to paying 50%. We remain in discussions about the lifts. The scaffolding is being struck and completion of landlords works to the external building is nearing.
 - 4) The Council's works to replace the shop front are scheduled for before Easter.

Jane Hartnell, January 2016