

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Agenda

Wednesday, 30 November 2016 at 6.00 pm

Council Chamber, Aquila House, Breeds Place, Hastings, East Sussex, TN34 3UY

For further information, please contact Michael Courts on 01424 451764 or email: mcourts@hastings.gov.uk

		Page No.
1.	Apologies for Absence	
2.	Declarations of Interest	
3.	Minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 13 September 2016	1 - 4
4.	Quarter 2 2016/17 Performance and Financial Monitoring (Jane Hartnell, Director of Corporate Services and Governance and Simon Hubbard, Director of Operational Services)	5 - 16
5.	Briefing from the Task and Finish Group to Review the Council's New Website (Michael Courts, Corporate and Democratic Services Officer)	17 - 20
6.	Update on the 2016/17 Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme (Mark Horan, Continuous Improvement and Democratic Services Manager)	21 - 22

This page is intentionally left blank

Agenda Item 3 Public Document Pack

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

13 SEPTEMBER 2016

Present: Councillors Webb (Chair), Howard, Bacon, Batsford, Cooke, Dowling, Rankin, Turner, Wincott and Atkins (as the duly appointed substitute from Councillor Patmore)

Apologies for absence were noted for Councillor Charman, Patmore and Poole.

Apologies for lateness were noted from Councillor Dowling.

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following Councillors declared an interest in the minutes:

Councillor	Minute No.	Interest
Rankin	4 – Performance and Financial Monitoring Quarter 1 2016/17	Personal – he owns and manages property in the town
Forward	4 – Performance and Financial Monitoring Quarter 1 2016/17	Prejudicial – she has leased a property to the social lettings agency
Davies	4 – Performance and Financial Monitoring Quarter 1 2016/17	Personal – he is member of the National Union of Teachers

2. MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 14 JUNE 2016 AND THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 26 JULY 2016

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 14 June 2016 and the Annual Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 26 July 2016 be approved as a correct

3. PERFORMANCE AND FINANCIAL MONITORING QUARTER 1 2016/17

The Director of Corporate Services and Governance presented a report which advised members of performance against the 2016/17 targets and performance indicators in the corporate plan for quarter 1. She noted that the format of the performance monitoring item had been reviewed over recent months, the feedback of the committee on potential areas to improve reporting.

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

13 SEPTEMBER 2016

It was noted that the quarter 1 target to increase the percentage of council tax collected in year had not been met, however, it was anticipated that performance could be recovered later and the year-end target of a 96.3% collection rate remained achievable. The Director of Corporate Services and Governance added that the committee would need to consider the impact of the introduction of Universal Credit to Hastings, scheduled to take place in December 2016, later in the year.

The Director of Corporate Services and Governance advised that staff in the People, Customer and Business Support team continued to work closely with service managers within the council to reduce the proportion of working days / shifts lost due to sickness absence. Members were mindful that, as the size of the council's workforce had reduce over time, any period of long-term sickness absence had a more significant effect on capacity within the organisation.

The committee acknowledged additional tasks undertaken by the Electoral Services team during quarter 1, successfully co-ordinating the Local Government Elections, Police and Crime Commissioner Elections and a Referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union. It was noted that facilitating the elections involved staff from across the organisation.

The Director of Operational Services gave an update on performance in quarter 1. He advised the committee that the quarter 1 target to reduce the rate of missed waste and recycling collections had not been met. Particular emphasis would be given to reducing the number of repeatedly missed collections. However, the quarter 1 target for recycling and street cleansing had been achieved. The committee expressed some concern at the growth of weeds around the town, and requested that the contractor consider re-treating certain areas. It was suggested that the committee receive a separate briefing on waste and street cleansing.

The newly appointed Planning Services Manager had undertaken a review of the council's Planning Service. The review had recommended the recruitment of additional Planning Officers to join the team, and this was now being progressed. The new officers would create additional capacity within the team and support further improvements in performance.

The committee was advised that the selective licensing scheme had exceeded its quarter 1 target, receiving 3,000 new applications against a target of 2,000. The fees for the scheme had been charged at a reduced rate for landlords who signed up in the first six months of the scheme. The fee structure for the scheme would now be reviewed and enforcement action taken against landlords who had failed to sign up to the scheme. It was anticipated that the additional income generated from the scheme would offset the cost of administering enforcement action. The council continued to engage proactively with landlords in the private rented sector, through regular meetings of the landlord's forum.

The Director of Operational Services also updated the committee on the impact of the recent decision to leave the European Union on funding streams to the town. He explained that high levels of uncertainty remained as negotiations to leave the European Union were still at an early stage. The government had indicated that funding for European Structural Investment Framework (ESIF) projects that had

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

13 SEPTEMBER 2016

previously been approved and signed would be guaranteed, this included CAN and SHINE. The council continued to pursue stage 2 bids for funding through FLAG and CLLD.

Consideration was given to the impact of the referendum decision on community cohesion. Both Hastings Voluntary Action Hate Crime Service and the Police had reported a limited increase in reported hate crime following the referendum. The Police have confirmed that they will take robust action to deal with any incidents of hate crime. The council and its partners would continue to monitor community cohesion issues and any potential future tensions as the negotiations with the European Union continued. The Hastings Youth Council had also been monitoring community cohesion issues amongst young people following the referendum decision, and the council would continue to support them in this. The Lead Member for Housing, Communications and Equalities agreed to ask for an update from East Sussex County Council as to what advice had been provided to local schools on supporting community cohesion. Members were keen that the image of Hastings as a welcoming and inclusive town should be maintained and developed.

Discussion took place regarding an ongoing project to develop a new visitor centre at Hastings Country Park. The council and its partner, Groundwork, continued to pursue funding opportunities to support the project through Interreg. In the meantime, a commitment remained to improving visitor facilities at the country park.

RESOLVED that -

- 1. The committees comments on quarter 1 performance be addressed by the relevant Lead Member(s) with appropriate action and report back, and;**
- 2. Staff be thanked for their hard work and achievements in this quarter**

The reason for this decision was:

To assist the council undertake performance management arrangements

4. UPDATE ON THE COUNCIL'S ORGANISATIONAL TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME

The Transformation Manager presented an update on the council's organisational transformation programme. He set out a number of key achievements over the past year, including the refurbishment of Aquila House, the beta launch of My Hastings and a new look and feel for the council's website and the adoption of the Customer First Strategy. He noted that through these activities a number of staff had gained additional skills, which may provide income generation opportunities in the future. Indeed, a key aspect of the transformation programme had been to support improvements to working practices across the organisation, and this would continue over the months to come.

The Transformation Manager noted that an ambitious programme of activities remained over the months to come, including a programme of service reviews, the implementation of the Customer First Strategy and a move towards the continuous improvement phase of the programme. The recommendations of the overview and

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

13 SEPTEMBER 2016

scrutiny review of digital inclusion, which had been undertaken as part of the 2015/16 work programme, would also be implemented as part of the refinement of the website and the promotion of online services.

Overview and Scrutiny members would continue to play a key role in encouraging the take up of My Hastings and providing constructive feedback on transformation activities through their performance monitoring role.

The committee welcomed the updated and thanked the Transformation Manager and his team for their efforts.

5. UPDATE ON THE 2016/17 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME

The Continuous Improvement and Democratic Services Manager presented an update on the key activities members had identified for quarter 1 as part of the Overview and Scrutiny work programme.

(The Chair declared the meeting closed at. 7.43 pm)

Agenda Item 4



Report to: Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: 30 November 2016

Report Title: Performance and Financial Monitoring Quarter 2 2016/17

Report By: Jane Hartnell, Director of Corporate Services and Governance and
Simon Hubbard, Director of Operational Services

Purpose of Report

To advise Members of the performance against the 2016/17 targets and performance indicators in the corporate plan for quarter 2 (1st July to 30th September), to update members on other key areas of activity during quarter 2 and to provide associated financial information.

Recommendation(s)

1. That the Committee's comments on quarter 2 performance be addressed with appropriate action and report back to the committee where necessary.
2. That staff be thanked for their hard work and achievements in this quarter.

Reasons for Recommendations

To assist the Council undertake performance management arrangements.

Introduction

1. The Council meeting on 24th February 2016 agreed the corporate plan for the period 2016/17 to 2018/19 – these documents set out the Council's strategic direction and outlines associated work areas for 2016/17.
2. The Overview and Scrutiny committee monitor progress against the targets and performance indicators set out in the corporate plan on a quarterly basis.

Performance Monitoring

3. The accompanying Director reports assist in steering the focus for scrutiny debate, covering key exceptions (performance shortfalls) and highlighting where there are deviations from expected performance against corporate plan targets, but also updating members on additional areas of activity absorbing officer time and resources.
4. A further supplementary document is also provided. The first part of this document complements the Director reports and highlights quarter two performance exceptions – those areas not meeting expected performance.
5. The latter part gives Members a progress update against all commitments in the corporate plan, highlighting expected performance over the year and flagging associated risks and mitigation.
6. It is intended that Members do not go through this supplementary document in detail at the meeting, as the Director reports flag the key performance exceptions.
7. Progress against each key activity is assigned a RAG (Red ,Amber, Green) status:

Targets 'on target' or 'achieved' are identified as Green.

Targets where there is 'slippage' or 'potential slippage' are identified as Amber.

Targets that 'will not meet target' are identified as Red.

Progress against Performances Indicators for the year up to the end of the quarter are shown as either 'Met' or 'Not Met'.

8. In the main, targets have been agreed for completion within the 2016/17 year, but increasingly a number of targets activities may complete or extend within or beyond the 2016/17 year, examples of this are the Transformation Programme and EU funding programme that are reported on separately.

Summary of Council-Wide Financial Information

9. Revenue Budget – The current forecasted outturn position at quarter 2 as shown in the table 1 below is an overall favourable variance to budget of £57,000. The revised 2016/17 and 2017/18 budget process is currently underway and this will incorporate the efficiency savings being identified as the Council's PIER and budget process progresses.

10. Revenue

Table 1: Corporate Resources and Operational Services – Revenue position

Directorate	Original 2016/17 Net Budget	2016/17 Draft Forecast Outturn	Variance	Use of Reserves	2016/17 Estimated Outturn Variance
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Operational Services	10,786	10,971	185	(67)	118
Corporate Resources	5,733	5,558	(175)	0	(175)
Total for Hastings Borough Council	16,519	16,529	10	(67)	(57)

11. Corporate Services are forecasting a favourable variance to budget which is due savings on rent following the purchase of Aquila House (£170,065). The gross saving on rent was £270,770 but interest only of £100,705 will be paid in 16/17. The prudential borrowing used to fund the purchase will incur costs from 2017/18.

12. Operational Services are forecasting an adverse variance of £118,000. There are numerous variances throughout the Directorate but the most notable of which are adverse variances on Selective Licensing £124,000 and the Housing Licencing Team £199,000. These are partially offset by £119,206 of favourable variances through the Directorate.

13. Capital programme

14. As Table 2 below shows the Gross expenditure to 30th September 2016 was £6.8m with a full year forecast of £9.6m against a budget of £12m which includes £1.4m of carry forwards.

Table 2: Corporate and Operational Services

Directorate	Original Budget 2016/17	Carry-forwards	Revised Budget	Spend to date including commitments 2016/17	QTR 2 Projected to year end	Qtr 2 Variance to Revised Budget
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Corporate Services	6,049	832	6,881	5,830	6,982	101
Operational services	4,522	566	5,088	974	2,665	(2,422)
	10,571	1,398	11,969	6,804	9,647	(2,321)

15. Corporate Services are showing additional costs on a number of projects such as the new factory unit £30,000 and Town Hall works £26,000.
16. Operational Services are forecasting an underspend due to a number of large projects such as the Harbour Arms & New Groynes (£175,000), Castle Access and Interpretation (£238,000) and Country park Interpretive Centre (£161,000) incurring delays in the programme. Some of these relate to timing of external funding decisions but it is anticipated by managers that the programmes will be delivered to budget.
17. Restoration of Pelham Crescent is being delayed due to difficulties in getting property owner buy in and other planning issues (£227,000)
18. Disabled Facilities Grant is showing a variance under budget of (£447,000) due to a additional funds being received this year, spend is similar with previous years.
19. Coastal Space Regeneration Project is forecasting a variance under budget of (£875,000) due to the project delivery date now expected to occur in 2017/18

Wards Affected

None

Policy Implications

Please identify if this report contains any implications for the following:

Equalities and Community Cohesiveness	No
Crime and Fear of Crime (Section 17)	No
Risk Management	No
Environmental Issues	No
Economic/Financial Implications	Yes
Human Rights Act	No
Organisational Consequences	No
Local People's Views	No
Anti-Poverty	No

Additional Information

Director Reports- Corporate Services and Governance and Operational Services
 Performance Exceptions
 Supplementary Performance Information

Officer to Contact

Officer Name Mark Horan
 Officer Email Address mhoran@hastings.gov.uk
 Officer Telephone Number 01424 451485

Briefing Note



Subject: **Briefing by Director of Operational Services**

Submitted to: Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: 30 November 2016

Prepared by: Simon Hubbard, Director of Operational Services

Performance Issues

1. Planning Performance

Planning performance saw a distinct improvement in Quarter 2.

- a. 100% of major applications in the quarter were met. The average for the first 2 quarters is 71% against an average annual target of 90%. Minor applications continue to improve with 82% of applications dealt with in 8 weeks against a target of 85%. The first quarter was 67% bringing the overall annual rate for the two quarters to 76%.
- b. Householder performance met the target of 65% in the quarter and is at 62% against the overall target for the first two quarters

The quarter 2 performance was a significant improvement from Q1 and mainly attributed to the additional staff within the team, namely the appointment of one additional temporary planner. The Senior Planning Officer has been appointed internally but will not start work until a replacement is found for her post, The Senior Officer post will replace the contracted Planning Officer, who will leave in end of November 2016. Therefore we are currently at staffing levels suggested within the Planning Review. Once the contracted Planning Officer leaves, there will be a short period of vacancy to back fill the existing post. Interviews are being held today for the back fill post.

As has been previously outlined the performance targets for next year will need to be reviewed in line with final targets established by government following the new Housing & Planning Act.

2. Waste Contract

Members will now be fully aware of the intention for the Waste Partnership to end the contact Kier in March 2019. However, it will not be confirmed if this will happen until each of the Partnership's Full Council meeting has ratified the

report. Rother Council is the final authority to make a decision, which will not be finalised until December 12th. This Council has now agreed this and attention will focus on the town issues of making the contract work for its remaining life and the shape of the provision of this service in the future. On this latter matter Eunomia Research & Consulting have been engaged by the Partnership to advise the Waste Directors and members can expect to hear more about this in the New Year. This will be pressing business as the timescales and the views of existing partners may differ about the best way forward. The Partnership has agreed to engage consultants to examine the benefits and risks from tendering an in house arrangement or a Council owned company and aims to have this done by Christmas.

3. Missed Bins P.I.

Last quarter I reported that missed bin performance was still higher than the target of 130/100,000 collections. This stimulated discussion with Members at Performance Review and at Overview and Scrutiny. Unfortunately I have now been advised that there was a typing error in the report. We reported 176/100,000 collections, but in fact it was worse being 210.

Throughout quarter 2 we have been working closely with Kier and their performance has improved. It has improved from 210 in Q1 to 180 in Q2. We are continuing to highlight our concerns to Kier and expect further improvement. I also understand that performance in relation to multiple missed collections, and missed collections for residents who receive an assisted collection for health reasons, have improved, which is very encouraging.

4. Long Term Strategy for significant improvements to Hastings Castle developed and agreed

Options are still being explored as to how best to proceed. Given its significance and importance, but with two failed Heritage Lottery Fund ('HLF') bids, it is vital that we get this right. We are keen to build on the 'invasion, identity and migration' themes identified by the University of Brighton in their work on the castle, either on or off the castle site.

One possibility is for Blue Reef, the current operator, to invest in the castle site in return for a much longer tenancy/operating agreement, but this is taking much longer than expected to progress. If this can be achieved, we are hoping to progress the wider interpretation of the castle, and the significance of the Norman invasion, off-site. If we cannot get agreement, we are likely to focus what resources we have, and can draw down from HLF, on the castle site itself, but this is likely to be a more modest project.

5. Professional Development within Environmental Health Team

In April 2015 we restructured our environmental health service into a more generic team. We reduced the number of managers by amalgamating 3 small teams into a single generic team under the management of Ian Wheeler, who became our new Environmental Health Manager. By June 2015 Ian had successfully recruited 3 new officers to fill long standing Environmental Health

Officer (EHO) vacancies. However, 2 of the 3 new staff were relatively inexperienced and Ian developed and managed a training programme for them, the aim being to help them to become fully qualified EHOs as quickly as possible.

The more fully qualified EHOs we have in Ian's team, the more flexible and resilient the team will be. However, it is notoriously difficult for environmental health graduates to satisfy the various requirements of the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health, which include demonstrating wide ranging practical experience evidenced through a log book, professional exams, etc. The training programme Ian developed for these new staff and their hard work is bearing fruit, and one of them (Scott Thirkettle) has recently qualified, whilst Renu Sherchan is on the verge of qualification. Both have already taken successful prosecutions in the local Magistrates Court in relation to noise nuisance offences, and are proving to be very useful members of the team. Ian and his staff are to be congratulated on the way they have supported our new inexperienced staff, and helped them with their professional development.

6. External Funding

Recent funding application successes are as follows:

- Connecting Hastings and Rother Together Community Led-Local Development (CHART-CLLD) – we have been notified of in principle approval of the Local Development Strategy. However, final approval is subject to satisfactory resolution of 2 queries from the managing authorities.
- Hastings Fisheries Local Action Group (HFLAG) – Funding is confirmed subject to satisfactory resolution of minor relative queries.

7. Housing – Syrian Refugees

In response to the Government's commitment to assist with the resettlement of 20,000 Syrian refugees, the Council has successfully resettled its first family in Hastings. This is part of the HBC commitment to resettle up to 100 refugees over the next five years. The family were collected from Gatwick airport and everything went smoothly and without incident.

8. 950th Anniversary

The 950th anniversary celebrations in October went very well, despite the appalling weather on bonfire night! Our celebrations attracted national publicity, and provided an undoubted boost to the town's visitor economy; every hotel and guest house in Hastings was reported as being full over the anniversary weekend, visitors being accommodated in Eastbourne and Tunbridge Wells.

9. White Rock Area

The White Rock area master planning work progressed well this quarter, with White Arkitekter having been appointed to lead on the work in July. Their work is now well underway, with a stakeholder workshop taking place on 23rd November.

Briefing Note



Subject: **Corporate Services and Governance Director's Quarter 2 report**

Submitted to: **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

Date: **30 November 2016**

Prepared by: **Jane Hartnell, Director of Corporate Services and Governance**

Performance Exceptions

Revenues and Benefits

1. The following performance indicators in Revenues are identified as Not Met:

6.1 Increase the % of Council Tax collected in year to 96.3%

Quarter two performance was 61.4% compared to profile target of 63.1%. The Revenues Manager remains confident that this performance will be improved and the year-end target of 96.3% will be met – performance is monitored on a weekly basis and changes are made to working practices as required.

6.2 Increase the % of non-domestic rates collected in year to 98% (JS)

Quarter two performance was slightly below target 59.1% compared to profile target of 59.5 and again the Revenues Manager remains confident that the year-end target of 98.0% will be met.

The benefits performance targets for this quarter have all been met.

2. There are a number of issues which are impacting significantly on the Revenues and Benefits service and this in turn is impacting on the delivery of some projects e.g. implementation of the landlord and bailiff portals:

- a. The introduction of the **Benefits Cap** is causing significant additional workload and uncertainty. Senior benefits managers in many councils, including ours, spent the weekend working and waiting for files to come from the DWP which never arrived – the updates can only be made when the system is off-line.

These changes now need to be made in a very short timescale to achieve a software system capable of handling the benefit cap. If not achieved there

will be a series of benefit overpayments – which although we will log as DWP errors and claim subsidy on, will not assist those customers affected not only with a cap but also an overpayment. The main transfer (200 people) was due to take place on 21 November but has been delayed to the 28 November.

The Revenues Manager has been successful in attracting additional external funding of £37k to enable proactive work with those residents faced with the benefit cap.

- b. The planning for further roll out of **Universal Credit** is also causing significant additional work for the team and the CCC who also need to be trained and prepared for the changes expected from 14th December.

There are many issues to be resolved including questions surrounding exempt properties for social landlords. If exempt then Universal Credit will not apply at present, but many are having difficulty showing they are really supported accommodation and therefore exempt.

The numbers going onto Universal Credit are also unclear, our previous experience has shown that DWP predictions but have been a gross exaggeration.

- c. The recommendation to keep the Council's Council Tax Reduction Scheme the same for 2017/18 is currently being considered by Cabinet and Council following the review and consultation exercise undertaken in the summer.

Organisational staffing issues

- 3. The proportion of working days/shifts lost due to **sickness absence** in quarter 2 was 3.44 which was higher than the target of 3.15, however this is much improved on the second quarter target this time last year of 4.06.

The sickness case absence management team have reviewed trigger points at which intervention is made and are actively working with managers to address areas of concern.

- 4. Recruitment to some vacant posts remains challenging. Of the 20 posts advertised in qtr 2, only 12 were recruited to. Examples include the Senior Accountant and Senior Planner posts. Some successful candidates choose to remain with their current employers, and some other posts are fixed term and therefore unattractive to applicants.

Transformation Programme

- 5. A detailed presentation was given to O & S at quarter 1 setting out progress and next steps. The priority for resources in quarter two has been business process mapping to contribute to the service reviews and budget discussions.

The process mapping approach works with service areas to identify the 'as is' position, and then through a series of discussions identifies the 'ideal' and what is required to get there. The key challenges posed to the teams are

which parts processes involve double handling of information, which parts can be automated and what relationship does it have to other teams' processes/activities. The solutions offered use digital by design as a fundamental driver and the Firmstep platform which is being embedded in many areas of our work.

6. Further priority customer transaction processes are being tested and launched on My Hastings for self-service, including complaints and FOI. A significant channel shift marketing campaign is being planned for January to coincide with the spike in contact post Christmas and as a result of annual billing.
 - There have been 46,543 cases created on FirmStep since the launch in May 2015. We have 19,607 customers on FS and 7,238 have activated their self-account.

<u>Account Type Summary</u>			
Account Type	Number	%age of All Accounts	%age of Self Accounts
Customers on FirmStep	19607		
Customers with Self Accounts	7238	36.92%	
Customers with Council Tax MyAccount	568	2.90%	7.85%
Customers with Benefits MyAccount	160	0.82%	2.21%

- Take up of the Council tax and Housing Benefits accounts is increasing every month but is still low, promotion will be undertaken to encourage customers to activate their accounts and self-serve more.
- In order to see how effective the channel shift from telephone to self is, the focus is on the waste service which is high volume and ideal for self. Telephone contact has reduced and in October self-service was the highest channel at 49.1%. The increase in waste self cases has happened since the introduction of pink sack requests on My Hastings of which 80% of requests are now via self.
- The missed collection data is also useful for an indicator of channel shift and is a high volume service request. The number of cases varies month to month but have been decreasing for the last 2 months. October has also seen a significant increase in % of cases reported through self at 42% and a corresponding decreased in telephone and email cases.

Financial Services and Internal Audit

7. The close down of the annual accounts was particularly challenging this year as we piloted meeting the more demanding timetable for 2017, by when the accounts need to be closed by end of June. The budget preparation period is also made more challenging this year by the loss of our Senior Accountant to Sussex Police.

8. The ongoing serious health condition of one of our Auditors means that the internal audit plan is behind schedule but this will be addressed by use of external auditors if necessary.

Legal Service and Elections

9. The work to prepare for the Pier arbitration, now due to take place in December has taken a significant amount of senior and junior legal officer time. In addition preparatory work for the introduction of the Public Space Protection Orders has been undertaken
10. The capacity in the small elections team would normally be fully directed at the annual household canvas at this time of year. In addition this year however they are implementing the outcomes of the boundary review changes and undertaking an interim polling places review. The new Senior Elections officer is in post and performing very well but will obviously need some time to fully learn the role.

Jane Hartnell, November 2016

Agenda Item 5

Briefing Note



Subject: Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish Group to Review the New Website

Submitted to: Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: 30 November 2016

Prepared by: Michael Courts, Corporate and Democratic Services Officer

Introduction

1. A key aspect of the council's organisational transformation programme is to make an increased number of its services available online.
2. As part of their work programme for 2015/16, a group of overview and scrutiny members had undertaken a review of digital inclusion. The review had examined the barriers which prevent people from accessing services online. Members also considered examples of good practice from a range of agencies in overcoming these barriers and encourage take-up of online services. A management response to the review was adopted by Cabinet on 5 September 2016.
3. At its annual meeting on 26 July 2016, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to continue to monitor digital inclusion by forming a task and finish group to review the council's new website.

Background

4. The Customer First Communications Champion, Transformation and ICT teams had carried out a comprehensive review of the content and layout of the council's website.
5. The structure of the new website aims to mirror face to face interactions, to ensure customer journeys are as streamlined as possible. The layout had also been designed to ensure the website was easily accessible across a range of devices, including computers, tablets and smart phones.
6. Teams across the council had been involved in reviewing the website content from their service to ensure the information was up to date and met corporate standards for the use of plain English and a customer first approach.

7. The new website is fully integrated with My Hastings, which enables users to carry out a variety of transactions online and contact the council about a range of issues. This approach also enables the council to record data and customer feedback more effectively.
8. The new website was launched on 13 July 2016.

Task and Finish Group

9. The task and finish group met on 20 September 2016.
10. The members of the task and finish group were Councillors Howard, Rankin and Dowling.
11. After an introduction and overview by the Customer First Communications Champion, the group were given a number of common tasks and transactions to carry out on the new site including; waste, revenues and benefits, licensing, planning, and housing enquiries.
12. Members views were sought on the customer journey to complete these tasks, the quality of the information available and the length of time it took them to complete each transaction.
13. The task and finish group provided very positive feedback on the new site, adding the content and customer journey had significantly improved.

Recommendations

14. The task and finish group made recommendations for further improvements, as follows:
 - Postcode Search for the Your Councillors page – the group recommended the re-introduction of a postcode search to enable residents to find the contact details for the ward Councillor. Since the meeting, the postcode search option has been reintroduced.
 - Reporting Pot Holes – during their initial testing, the task and finish group found that the link from the council's website to East Sussex County Council's online reporting system for potholes was broken. The link has been corrected and now takes users directly to the East Sussex Highways site.
 - Postcode search for council tax and non-domestic rates –the task and finish group suggested introducing a post code search for council tax and non-domestic rates look-up. The Customer First Communications Champion agreed to investigate this with the Revenues and Benefits team.
 - Further testing by all members – the task and finish group suggested that all members should be encouraged to test the new website and provide feedback to the team. A copy of the exercise completed by the task and

finish group has been sent to all members by email and a reminder placed in the Members Bulletin.

15. The task and finish group thanked all those who had supported the launch of the council's new website.

This page is intentionally left blank

Appendix A – Quarterly list of work programme ideas

Phase

<p>Quarter 1</p>	<p>Meeting with the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council – the future of the council and corporate prioritising – meeting held in September 2016</p>	<p>Update on the organisational transformation programme at Q1 committee meeting – update submitted to committee</p>	<p>Update to Q1 committee meeting on EU funding programme – update included in Director’s briefing to committee</p>	<p>Briefing on waste and street cleansing in advance of Q1 committee meeting – briefing circulated, a further meeting will be scheduled</p>
<p>Quarter 2</p>	<p>Base Budgeting – learning from cleaning contract procurement process – to be considered by Scrutiny Steering Group</p>	<p>Update to Q2 committee meeting on Cultural Regeneration – meeting scheduled for January 2017</p>		
<p>Quarter 3</p>	<p>Update to Q3 committee meeting on the Planning Service – potential special meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee</p>	<p>Commence review of Scrutiny functions</p>	<p>Update on initiatives as part of a greener town and associated income generation opportunities</p>	<p>Update to Q3 committee meeting on application IT to assist transformation, including use of blockchain technologies</p>
<p>Quarter 4</p>	<p>Concluding the 2016/17 work programme</p>			

Agenda Item 6

Page 21

