

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder

14 December 2010

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CORPORATE SERVICES DRAFT SERVICE PLAN 2011/12

Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder with an update on the revised Corporate Services Service Plan for 2011/12.
2. This is not a key decision, but it has been brought to this meeting so that the portfolio holder can consider performance improvement and resource headlines, prior to the full service plan being submitted for approval in March 2011.

Recommendations

3. That the Finance and Staffing Portfolio Holder endorses the service plan actions identified in this report and suggests additions or amendments to these if required.

Background

4. The existing Corporate Services Service Plan covers the period 2010/11 - 2012/13 and includes a number of service plan projects intended to run over a 2 or 3 year timeframe. This is therefore a refresh of the service plan designed mainly to introduce new service plan actions to address external challenges.
5. The service plan template has been updated during 2010 and the final draft of the service plan will be presented in the new format.
6. The Corporate Services Service Plan differs to other service plans within the Council in the following ways:
 - The HR and Payroll service drives organisational people development; supports the Council in attracting and retaining the right people, providing an environment to maximise performance, influencing and supporting organisational change and in achieving equality and diversity.
 - Legal and Democratic Services face key legislative changes in the Democracy & Localism Bill and changes to the ethical standards regime - abolition of national code of conduct and potential to create a local code of conduct for SCDC.

Considerations

7. The service plan refresh takes account of a number of significant changes, including those arising from the agenda of the coalition Government following the 2010 general election. These include:
 - Accountancy:
 - Approval of statement of accounts for 2010/11 before 30 June 2011 on the basis of international financial reporting standards (IFRS) and receipt of unqualified audit opinion by 30 September 2011;

- Preparation for reform of the housing revenue account with the abolition of the subsidy system, the imposition of substantial debt, the need for a robust long term financial strategy / cash flow projection and the consequences for treasury management;
 - Assisting with (through understanding costs), monitoring and reporting on the achievement of substantial efficiencies and cuts in services to achieve the outcomes forecast in the medium term financial strategy which is currently (December 2010) predicting a cash reduction in general grant;
 - Improve financial knowledge throughout the authority (both officers and Members) and use present financial system to full potential;
 - Assist businesses through the economic downturn.
 - HR / Payroll:
 - Responding to legislation (HR1, HR5, HR7);
 - Value for money services (HR2, HR3, HR4, HR5, HR6);
 - Responding to economic/financial pressures (HR3);
 - Responding to changing demographics (HR3).
 - ICT:
 - Desktop virtualisation;
 - Office productivity suite upgrade;
 - Upgrade / replace corporate email system;
 - Flexible and remote working;
 - Shared and partnership working;
 - Support service initiatives and associated applications / systems;
 - Tell Us Once;
 - Improve Website/Intranet;
 - Implement web-based FOI tracking and publishing tool/application (Disclosure Log);
 - Publish more Council data online;
 - Extend the use of LLPG (property gazetteer);
 - Improve Graphic, Print & Web Service
 - Legal / Land Charges / Democratic Services:
 - Prepare for changes to be introduced by the Democracy & Localism Bill, including impact on Standards Committee work;
 - Continue to explore potential for legal shared services across Cambridgeshire;
 - Reconsider external procurement of legal services to reduce external legal spend;
 - Focus on Member Training & Development & achieving Member Charter Status;
 - Reduce turnaround time for local searches by working closely with other council departments;
 - Deal with the impact of refunding charges for property searches under the Environmental Information Regulations.
8. In addition, the final version of the service plan will need to reflect the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review and the eventual financial settlement announcement from the Government regarding the Council's grant allocation.
9. Finally, there may be additional improvement actions (and possibly further proposals for new expenditure), once other corporate areas' service plans have been reviewed.

Options

10. The draft final service plan includes over 40 service improvement actions designed to address the challenges posed by these various changes. The service plan actions designed to address the main drivers noted above are as follows:

A1	Approval of statement of accounts for 2010/11 before 30 June 2011 on the basis of international financial reporting standards (IFRS) and receipt of unqualified audit opinion by 30 September 2011.	Understanding and interpreting the guidance notes (available December 2010), on IFRS, restating previous year's figures and substantially changing the layout and content of the statement of accounts document.
A2	Preparation for reform of the housing revenue account with the abolition of the subsidy system, the imposition of substantial debt, the need for a robust long term financial strategy / cash flow projection and the consequences for treasury management.	Dependent on consultation (expected January 2011) and final details.
A3	Assisting with (through understanding costs), monitoring and reporting on the achievement of substantial efficiencies and cuts in services to achieve the outcomes forecast in the medium term financial strategy which is currently (December 2010) predicting a cash reduction in general grant.	Monitored and reported as part of the monthly financial position statement.
A4	Improve financial knowledge throughout the authority (both officers and Members) and use present financial system to full potential.	Continued rollout of financial training and use of purchase ordering; introduction of electronic approval of invoices including changes to workflow of documents.
A5	Assist businesses through the economic downturn	Pay undisputed commercial invoices within increased targets of 98% within 30 days and 76% within 10 working days.

HR1	Recruitment and retention of employees	Review key policies and procedures in the light of the new Equality Act and complete EQIAs as part of each review.
HR2	Performance management	Continue to ensure that Personal Development Plans are properly recorded from PDRs. Provide development to managers and supervisors in areas such as motivation, leadership and performance management.
HR3	Organisational development	Develop a framework for a staff forum
HR4	Management of sickness absence and capability issues	Improve attendance rates by delivering absence management training to managers and continue to improve absence reporting. BV12 measurement to be used as comparator.
HR5	Equalities	Review key policies and procedures in the light of the new Equality Act and complete EQIAs as part of each review. EQIA to be completed on the new pay and grading scheme.
HR6	Customer experience of job application process	Complete the improvement work on the jobs portal including implementation of electronic equality monitoring. Move to electronic applications only.
HR7	Completion of single status	Introduction of new pay and grading scheme.
I 1	Desktop virtualisation	Provisioning of standard desktop environments from a central source to reduce the management and support requirements leading to more efficient operations and reduced budgetary requirements.
I 2	Office productivity suite upgrade	Upgrade the desktop MS Office suite from Office 2000 to a new version capable of supporting requirements for users, system integrators and our partners when sharing information.
I 3	Upgrade / replace corporate email system	Upgrade the email system in tandem with the office suite to ensure it is capable of supporting requirements for users, system integrators and our partners when sharing information.
I 4	Flexible and remote working	Providing the support and required environments to provide remote but secure working ensure flexibility and improved officer efficiencies and contributes to the 'green agenda'.
I 5	Shared and partnership working	Provide ICT Support for departmental and corporate initiatives for shared services ensuring best use of resources, efficiencies and value for money.
I 6	Support service initiatives and associated applications / systems	Provide ICT Support for departmental and corporate initiatives / application development ensuring best use of resources, efficiencies and value for money.
I 7	Tell Us Once	In parallel with the national initiatives, ensure the Tell us Once ethos becomes embedded in our use/reuse of citizen data and through that process improve efficiencies, service delivery and customer satisfaction.

I 8	Improve Website/Intranet	Ensure our internet presence supports the aspirations of service areas and provides the correct customer content, contact channels and an easy to use viable alternative to the more traditional face-to-face or telephony service. Encourage self serve interaction to be the method of choice.
I 9	Implement web-based FOI tracking and publishing tool/application (Disclosure Log)	Through better engagement with FOI and Information Management processes, publish any and all public data collected or used by the Council.
I 10	Publish more Council data online	Using the principles developed through the Tell Us Once initiative and our FOI tracking/publication combined with our updated and improved website, provide the customer with a easy to use accessible source of information which in turn will reduce direct customer contact and ensure improved efficiencies.
I 11	Extend the use of LLPG (property gazetteer)	Promote the Address Management Service throughout SCDC, so that it becomes the master address database for all the Council's systems that rely property data ensuring a consistent and cohesive source of information leading to service improvements and service consistency.
	Improve Graphic, Print & Web Service	Ensure our in-house graphic, print and web service meets the needs of service areas and explores opportunities to further expand the available resources. Make best use of the technology and physical assets to support a value for money service and provide the Council with the professional image it deserves.
LS1	Legal Services	Create and publish Service Standards for the Legal Office to improve service to customers
LC1	Land Charges	Provision of totally electronic searches for Land Charges (NLIS Level 3) and reduction of turnaround times for searches.
LD1	Democratic Services	Investigate utilising social media for reaching public (webcasting, Twitter, member blogs and webpages).
LD2	Democratic Services	Utilise web-based training resources for members to encourage take-up of training offered.
RB1	Income Maximisation Strategy	Work with Housing to establish new strategy to review service charges, rents and other income generating options. To include spend to save project for low income families.
RB2	CSE	Umbrella project to ensure delivery of service improvements arising from CSE, and Revenues and Benefits Savings projects 2010/11.
RB3	Private Rented Sector	Work with Housing Advice and Homeless team to, monitor impact of HB changes etc.
RB4	Localism	Potential Impact on Council Tax setting and localised NNDR.

RB5	Welfare Reforms	Potential impact of Local Council Tax benefit (Rebate) Changes to LHA, and Other proposed changes to Housing and Council tax benefit (Universal Credit).
RB6	Growth	Will lead to an increase in Council Tax Charge payers and Benefit claimants.
RB7	Spending review	Adjusting to the impact of the overall public sector spending cuts and reductions in welfare spending announced as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review in October 2010 / Welfare Reforms.
RB8	Empty Homes Strategy	Work with Affordable Homes on the implementation of an Empty Homes Strategy; Revenues would probably be a first point of contact, leading to discussions with homeowners about bringing properties back into available use.

Implications

11.	Financial	The draft service plan is prepared in the context of the Comprehensive Spending Review, but without knowing the detail of how SCDC will be affected by changes in government funding. Some improvement actions may require financial resources to implement them; these will be brought to Members for agreement as part of the service estimates and council tax setting process.
	Legal	Some of the proposed improvements will address anticipated legislative changes, as described above; where they will have legal implications, these will be addressed in the individual project plans.
	Staffing	It is possible that some of the proposed actions may have staffing implications. Where this is the case, these will be addressed in the individual project plans.
	Risk Management	Significant risks to Corporate Services' services and improvements will be summarised in the service plan overview; the Corporate Services risk register will be updated to reflect new risks arising; projects to implement improvement actions will have risk logs associated with them.
	Equality and Diversity	Some of the HR/Payroll improvements are directed towards equality and diversity issues, as described above; where they will have equality and diversity implications, these will be addressed in the individual project plans.
	Equality Impact Assessment completed	No Equality Impact Assessments will be carried out on improvement actions as necessary and as they are initiated.
	Climate Change	The draft service plan does not have any direct climate change implications; projects to implement improvement actions will consider any impact on climate change (e.g. CO ₂ reductions etc).

Consultations

12. The draft Corporate Services service plan has been produced with regard to the Council's current strategic aims and proposed aims for 2011/12. The draft service

plan also takes into account known requirements for Corporate Services support in assisting other, directly customer facing, service areas.

Effect on Strategic Aims

13.	<i>Commitment to being a listening council, providing first class services accessible to all.</i>
	Corporate Services supports the Council's overall delivery of corporate objectives and services to the taxpayers of South Cambridgeshire District Council in an accessible, effective and efficient manner.
	Corporate Services covers a wide range of disciplines and ensures that elected Members and staff are able to deliver their responsibilities and members of the public receive their services, across all strategic aims.
	<i>Commitment to ensuring that South Cambridgeshire continues to be a safe and healthy place for all.</i>
	<i>Commitment to making South Cambridgeshire a place in which residents can feel proud to live.</i>
	<i>Commitment to assisting provision for local jobs for all.</i>
	Pay undisputed commercial invoices within target days will assist businesses through the economic downturn.
	<i>Commitment to providing a voice for rural life.</i>

Conclusions / Summary

14. This report sets out in summary form the key drivers that need to be addressed by the 2011/12 service plan. The draft service plan actions listed above will be incorporated within the final service plan to be taken to the March portfolio holder meeting for approval.

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

None

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