

Cabinet Member for Support Services and the Working Environment **Annual Report to Scrutiny April 2019**

Human Resources (HR)/Payroll

The HR team has undergone significant personnel change during 2018/19, the Group Manager for HR retired, having been in position for a significant period of time. To support the change and ensure adequate HR resource is available to Group Managers and service areas, a new role of Senior HRBP was created and has been appointed internally, further supporting ongoing succession planning and development within the team. The nature of the changes has meant that the team has largely focused on operational support early in the year, but in recently recruiting a further HRBP, the team has been able to offer a more proactive approach to each department, partnering with the L&D function to ensure continuous improvement and development in each area.

In terms of activity, the HR team has continued to support change activity within departments as appropriate as but to a lesser degree than in the previous 12 months. From 2019, the focus has been for HRBPs to partner their service areas in reviewing structural changes, in line with the original business case, in order to establish successes and determine additional support required in order to further embed changes, ensuring cost and performance objectives are being met and appropriate development requirements are delivered.

A further staff survey was conducted, using the same questions as posed to Council employees in 2018, allowing a year on year comparison to be drawn. Group Managers are now working on departmental action plans to address areas of weaker scores, whilst also recognising strong performance and reinforcing associated behaviours.

Job Evaluation system

During 2018, the organisation invested in new software, aligned with the NJC green book scheme, enabling the opportunity for the organisation to assess and review grades of posts. Subsequent training was carried out late 2018; a working party consisting of employer and union reviewed the process in January 2019, the first 'live' evaluations commenced in February. This software offers concise reports whereby the pay and grading group are able to review and drill down on each factor, allowing a more robust and consistent process in the future.

Payroll

It has been a busy year for Payroll, outside of the operational delivery of accurate and timely pay, the Gender Pay gap report was calculated and submitted for the second year. There have also been developments in the way pay information is communicated to our employees, in ceasing to supply paper copies of payslips all pay information, and including P60s is now available via the individual employee portal, both reducing cost and supporting our efforts to consider impact on the environment. As well as allowing employees control of access of records.

In line with the communication of a further increase in the National Living Wage a new pay scale has also been drawn up, the lowest scale is now £9.00/hour ensuring some gap between this and the new NLW rate of £8.21/hour, reflecting an appropriate differential thereafter. This was a large piece of work, not only in drawing up the scales but in consultation and communication to our staff, these new scales will be implemented effective 1st April 2019.

Health & Safety

Work carried out during 2018-19

- 16 x Health and Safety, safety reviews
- All commercial asset sites have had Fire Risk Assessments review carried out with recommendations made to Managers were required
- The following in-house training courses were completed
- 6 Fire Wardens courses
- 6 First Aid courses
- 2 Principals of health and safety
- 10 Service specific H&S courses

Accident Reporting 2018-19

To date a total of 39 accident reports have been received of with none requiring reporting to RIDDOR. All incidents have been investigated and improvements made or training given where appropriate.

Health and Safety Policies

All health and safety policies are up to date

Planned Work for 2019-20

- To continue to follow up on the action plans previously created and review the current level of performance against the health and safety regulations and high risk services resulting in developing action and training plans to ensure compliance to regulations and approved codes of practise
- To work with the Human Resource and Learning and Development teams to deliver the wellbeing activities planned for 2019-20.
- To deliver in-house training for First Aid for Mental Health to support the plans to reduce short-term sickness absence

Learning and Development (L&D) 2018 - 2019

Group Managers have remained responsible and accountable for their employee's training and development and as a result bid for their required portion of the corporate training budget. This required them to put together a training plan detailing the CPD, Health & Safety and Post Entry need for their service.

The remainder of the L&D budget was held centrally and covered the Management Development Programme, the Aspiring Managers Programme, the ILM Level 5 Workplace Coaching Programme, membership to the South West Councils Coaching Pool and other identified development needs. This included investigation

and disciplinary Training together with a course catalogue, based on trends found within the development section of the individual service's training plan.

Our 2nd year of partnering with the training provider CRISP has continued to be successful with 111 places used across the 14 in-house seminars which formed our course catalogue. This included communication skills, coping with change, problem solving, presentation skills, delivering excellent customer service, persuasion and influence, business writing, managing for efficiency and effectiveness and effective mentoring and was available for all staff.

We ran a second Aspiring Managers Programme in 2018/19 facilitated by CRISP due to the success of the previous one in 2017/18 with the same format of a 6 day training programme including a final wrap up of the programme, ending with the 11 Officers giving a presentation and Q&A session to Group Managers and Cabinet Members explaining their key learns and the benefits of the programme.

Open Courses held at the CRISP Head Office in Exeter were also attended by a variety of staff at all levels as part of our partnership, covering delegation, effective meetings, dealing with difficult people & negativity and leading your team.

11 members of staff across the services have been signed up to Post Entry Training to enable them to gain a specialist formal qualification, however the Apprenticeship Levy really has created opportunities for new and existing staff to obtain on the job learning and formal qualifications at no extra cost (the cost is deducted from the Levy). 2018/19 has seen 22 Apprenticeships sign ups ranging from Level 2 up to MBA Degree Apprenticeships. With strong relationships built with Petroc, Exeter College, Exeter University and South Devon College we are able to offer a vast range of Apprenticeships to suit the different needs of both the organisation and the learner.

Our Learning Management System has been up and running for almost a year now with users being able to access policies and training plus course bookings and content. There are over 200 eLearning courses covering legislation, management, personal wellbeing, safety and technology to name just a few. Over 8500 certifications were completed in 2018 which form part of the mandatory training for all employees. Each employee's training records are held within the LMS giving the ability of tracking and reporting on completion of learning. New initiatives such as "eBytes", Languages and new Microsoft Applications training are in the process of being installed together with the potential of using the Appraisals system. The LMS is an evolving system with the outstanding potential to continue to adapt to the organisation's needs.

2018-19 Electoral Services

Electoral Registration

- Met 100% of Electoral Commission Performance Standards for Electoral Registration
- Achieved a response from 99% of Mid Devon households for annual canvass of electors, as was the case last year.

- 24% of the returned household electoral registration forms were electronic (internet, phone and text), compared to 28% last year
- Supported the Cabinet Office's National Democracy Week by hosting a commemorative tree planting ceremony to mark 100 years since women gained the right to vote (jointly with Communications and Member Services)
- Will end the year on budget

Elections

- Met 100% of Electoral Commission Performance Standards for the Returning Officer
- Administered 3 by-elections. These included one District election (Cranmore) and two Tiverton Town Council elections (Cranmore and Castle).
- Commenced plans for May 2019 District and Town/Parish elections
- Made contingency plans for other large scale unscheduled polls, most urgently European Parliamentary elections on 23 May 2019.

Member Services

Ongoing support to Members

- Member Services continues to support Members with any issue that is within their remit, even if it is only to signpost the member to the appropriate officer. Members have also been supported in the use of their iPads.

Ongoing Committee work

- Ongoing work in terms of Council, Cabinet and Committee meetings.
- Provision of support and assistance to the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) on their review of Members Allowances.
- Working Groups in the current year have included Community Engagement, Partnerships, Car Parking, Homelessness and Consultation.

New Council 2019

- A considerable amount of work has been undertaken with regard to an induction programme for the new Council in May 2019. The programme has been distributed to members via the Weekly Information Sheet. Prospective Councillors evenings were held in January/February this year, a whole host of information was available to those who attended. The information has also been provided to the political parties for distribution amongst their candidates.

Member Development

- Member Services continue to support the development of Members; alongside the development which takes place in house for specific/timely training, we provide a shared service with regard to member development with other Devon authorities on strategic issues, at the current time 3 of our members are part of the 'Developing your leadership Potential ' course. The shared service will be used

extensively at the tail end of the induction programme for new members following May 2019 with regard to specific skill sets.

- The team reports to the Member Development Group which consists of 5 Members and includes the Group Leaders.
- Member Development Charter - the Charter was reconfirmed in March 2017 and the team continues to work within the remit of the charter.
- Members briefings are also organised when appropriate and shared with other local authorities and Parish Councils if appropriate
- Informal Workshops for PDG's and Committees – these have been put in place on a regular basis and have been well received by Members and Officers

Civic support

- Ongoing support to the Chairman of the Council, organising his diary and his attendance at civic events in Mid Devon and other districts. The Chairman's PA has organised a host of events in the past year which has included, the annual civic service, an event to commemorate the 100 year anniversary of the end of the First World War and an event to commemorate the suffrage movement. Alongside these events and on top of her day to day work, she continues to lead on the Operation London Bridge project.

Parish Liaison

- Parish Liaison continues, with a team member taking the lead, this has provided a single point of contact and has improved communication with the Town and Parish Councils and the team now supports the Town and Parish Councils alongside the District Councillors

Monitoring Officer Support/Deputy Monitoring Officer role

- Support has been given to the Monitoring Officer with regard to meeting procedures and work on the Constitution.

Policy/Research Officer

- Following a request from the Scrutiny Committee and a recommendation of the Peer review (2017), a part time officer has been in place since October 2017, his role is to undertake research and policy analysis to further the work of the council's scrutiny function as well as shaping thought around future policy direction in servicing the council's various policy development groups.

PUBLIC HEALTH

The Plan is informed by the priorities set out in the Devon Joint Health and Well Being Strategy to address health inequalities. Mid Devon District Council's Public Health Action Plan focuses on the following areas:

- Fuel poverty – ensuring residents take advantage of national and local government incentives and grants to improve the energy efficiency of their property thereby reducing costs e.g. ECO flex, the Local Energy Advice Program (LEAP), MDDC’s Energy Switching service and Wessex Loans.
- Air quality – air and noise pollution are associated with a number of negative health outcomes. The district has two recognised Air Quality Management Areas and has potential pressures as a result of proposed housing development. The Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) seeks to mitigate the effects of air pollution on our residents through a range of measures.
- Delivering physical exercise and well-being programs through our leisure services and with our partners e.g. Active Start, Cancer rehab, and Active Families.
- Engaging with our communities - communicating health messages and campaigns through our various media channels and networks

Prevention of cardiovascular disease and cancer

Public Health and Regulatory Services and Mid Devon Leisure have been working together on a GP exercise referral program since 2017. GP patients are offered a 12 week program at a reduced cost. It is suitable for a wide range of people and conditions, including those who may not have exercised before, or not for a very long time. Examples of conditions include high blood pressure, diabetes, mental health issues and arthritis. The program continues to receive referrals from GPs and around half of referrals go on to take out membership at the leisure centre. A total of 117 people went through G.P scheme in 2018/9.

Public Health previously supported the training of Leisure staff to undertake cancer rehab training. 67 people (funded by FORCE) are now on the cancer rehab scheme and a further 10 people (funded through the NHS ESCAPE Pain programme) are on the scheme.

Physical exercise and wellbeing

A new group, based on the successful Active Mums group in Crediton commenced at Tiverton in spring 2018. The group encompassed a similar format, promoting exercise for parents with small children using bikes and buggies. Active Devon and Mid Devon District Council provided start-up funding for the equipment and coordinated training for the parents. Amory Park was chosen as it has safe, suitable paths and a separate tarmacked area for training. It also has the storage space for the equipment. The project will be starting again in spring 2019.

Addressing Fuel Poverty

Public Health provides access to ECO grants through the national ECO flex and HHCRO programs, energy switching via our website and a home visit scheme (LEAP) designed to give households comprehensive support to help lift them permanently from fuel poverty through the installation or upgrade of energy efficiency measures such as insulation and more cost effective heating systems.

In February 2018 the Council produced a ‘Statement of intent’ (SOI) which provided the eligibility criteria for ECO Flex so that heating and insulation companies could market the scheme in the Mid Devon area. Of 112 applications approved by end of

January 2019 18% had a person living with a health condition that could be exacerbated by living in a cold/damp house and 11% had a child under the age of 16 yrs. The majority of applications were for residents over the age of 60yrs. For residents who apply under the ECO flex scheme Public Health (private sector housing) also provide a top-up grant up to £2K if the scheme does not fully cover the cost of the heating upgrade.

Mid Devon District Council is a member of the Cosy Devon Partnership which works with the Local Energy Advice Project (LEAP) in identifying and referring households (both private rental and owner occupied) for home energy assessment visits. Referrals into the LEAP scheme totalled 168 from 03/18 to 03/19.

Air Quality

There are twenty-one measures identified in the Air Quality Action Plan. The measures range from small-scale projects such as car clubs, to large infrastructure projects such as the Cullompton Town Centre Relief Road.

The plan will be critical to the future protection of public health and the prevention of new management areas. This encompasses the management of additional vehicle and stationary emissions arising directly from new major developments across the district including the Cullompton area proposals in particular. A strong emphasis will be placed on a preventative, design-led approach to low emissions strategies and sustainable development underpinned by the relevant transport infrastructure.

Crediton Town Council conducted a Traffic and Urban Realm Feasibility Study in Crediton Town Centre liaising with Public Health at Mid Devon District Council on specific air quality outcomes within the Air Quality Action Plan. The study analysed the current traffic and urban realm conditions within the town centre and fringe area and presented a vision for the High Street which is based on clear aims and outcomes. There are obvious benefits of this study for air quality and it will hopefully provide some impetus for a strategic and joined up approach to the issues. The study has support from Devon County Council and the Town Council are currently working with the s106 Monitoring Officer on future funding. Further air quality modelling work is scheduled in the coming months to provide the evidence base for the proposed measures.

Health and Well-being Member Briefing

In August 2018, at the request of Members, a Health and Wellbeing briefing was held at Phoenix House. Dr Dixon (Culm Valley Integrated Centre for Health), Ruby Entwistle (Public Health Devon County) and Charlotte Chandler (NHS) provided expert opinion on the challenges and importance of good diet and nutrition.

Website offer

A new 'Health and Well-being' page has been created for Public Health with links to useful topics and resources. It can be accessed easily from Council's website page. <https://www.middevon.gov.uk/residents/health-and-wellbeing/>

Customer First

Customer First is a support service, providing front line customer service and admin support for other council services.

The team is the first point of contact for our customers across many access channels and also provide the central admin service, handling incoming and outgoing post, printing, scanning and much more.

2018 saw a significant change in the way we provided services, by the removal of cash payments by agent at Phoenix House. The resulting change has allowed us to make a saving of £24k for 19/20 by a reduction in staff through not replacing a vacancy.

Whilst the change in taking payments has had an impact on phone calls and visitors to Reception it is still a little early, at the time of writing, to be able to accurately measure the impact overall. December to February is traditionally the quietest time of year for payments and visitors. However, below is a table indicating the changes in customer behaviours over the last two years based on the data that we have.

Annualised Data	2017/2018	2018/2019 (11.5 months data)	Comment
Visitors to our offices	30202	21667	28% decrease
Number of Calls	133356	123374	7% decrease
Print Requests	224	176	21% decrease
Items of post despatched	191080	160156	16% decrease
Last Qtr	17/18	18/19 (to mid-March)	Comment
Kiosk Payments - Cash (self service)	538	1544	187% increase
Kiosk Payments - Card	507	1473	190% increase
Electronic payments	43416	57676	33% increase
Phone payments (automated)	3446	3154	8% decrease
Bank	10710	9656	10% decrease
Post Office	5708	4771	16% decrease

Visitor numbers being dealt with Face-to-Face is showing a continuing drop year on year. Up to the December 1st 2018 visitors were down by 15%. After the closure of the Cash Desk the numbers have shown over a 50% drop. Some of our cash customers still continue to visit, however they are self-serving using our payment kiosk in Reception.

Online transactions continue to increase. 2018 saw a 43% increase on 2017 figures. Current figures for 2019 show that this trend continues with an average increase of 30% on 2018's figures for the same period (Jan-Feb). Much of this will be attributable to cash customers changing to online methods of payment.

Further evidence of the shift of customer/business behaviours is seen in a decrease in large print/post jobs being processed by the Admin Team. Printing and pre-paid postage is down by 20% and Franking down by 40%. Some of this work will have shifted to Synertec our outsourced print partner.

During 2018 we were carrying a number of vacancies. Those have now been filled, and in conjunction with our new staff, we are revisiting the training that staff is receiving. This is with a view to increasing our resilience, consistency and improving our customer services.

Staff are also becoming flexible throughout the team in order to meet changing customer needs. In order to ensure we continue to understand and meet these needs we will be carrying out a customer survey during 2018/19. This will take place over a number of channels, including Face-to-Face, online, by telephone and on paper.

1st April 2018 – 25 March 2019

Total comments for all services 663

Complaints	353
Compliments	123
Comments	184

The annual complaints report will be produced later in the year.

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

We received 731 FOI/EIRs in the year and replied to 743, 95% on time. We have also dealt with 7 review requests and 6 complaints to the ICO. Clearance of the records archive at Old Road is progressing. Information Audit and Records Retention work is also progressing.