

**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
BRIEFING PAPER FROM THE CABINET MEMBER FOR THE WORKING
ENVIRONMENT AND SUPPORT SERVICES**

Electoral Services

- Planning for 5 May Police and Crime Commissioner Election
- Planning for 23 June EU Referendum
- Met 100% of Electoral Commission Performance Standards for Electoral Registration and Elections in 2015-16
- 98% response to annual electoral registration canvass of properties

Member Services

Ongoing support to Members

- Member Services continues to support Members with any issue that is within their remit, even if it 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 Committee meetings.
- Provision of support and assistance to the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) on their fundamental review of Members Allowances.
- Working Groups including efficiencies, partnership working and edible food waste.

Member Development

- Member Services continue to support the development of Members; Personal Development Plan interviews are taking place, if any particular themes arise from the interviews, training sessions will be put in place. The team reports to the Member Development Group which consists of 5 Members and includes the Group Leaders.
- Members briefings are also organised when appropriate.

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.

Legal Services

Activities in the Legal team at present include;

- Assisting Property Services in Premier Inn development, consolidating all legal interests in Town Hall site, agreeing leases for retail premises and industrial units and purchase of land on Eastern Urban extension for affordable housing;
- Providing Planning Service with representation at Public Inquiries, successful prosecution of slaughter man running an illegal abattoir

- Representing the Council in numerous Housing cases involving antisocial behaviour, hoarding and drug dealing.

Public Health Update – Key actions/events

- Early November 2015 – appointment of Public Health Officer
- Arranged health checks with Waste and Recycling workforce. To be completed on site in early March by staff from Devon Doctors Service.
- Provided feedback on the Corporate Plan and liaised with Devon County Public Health who also provided comment.
- Met with ECO Stars project provider and provided further leads for recruitment to the scheme. Review of scheme due end of March – currently liaising with Devon County PH and their counterparts in Devon County with the view to expanding the scheme Devon-wide.
- Attended South West Fuel Poverty Forum in February – liaising with National Energy Action to provide a stand in the Phoenix House Library to promote the Central heating fund and Cosy Devon Scheme in early March.
- Community and Voluntary Services Fund – currently small amounts of funding have been provided to 6 organisations. The criteria are based around public health outcomes with all applicants to date supporting emotional health and resilience. A further two applications are in the pipeline. Also a program to roll out a mental health toolkit is being considered.
- MDDC public health plan – a presentation to the Community Well Being PDG was provided to introduce some of the key issues that could form part of the plan. A consultation process will be held throughout Feb/March to finalise the plan.
- Ongoing engagement with Leisure Centres around data analysis and marketing. Will be looking at how we target groups of highest deprivation.

Customer services

Statistics for 1 April 15 to 31 December 15

Visitors to our offices = 38,404

Number seen in 15 minutes = 95%

Phone call answered- call centre = 93,053

% answered = 90%

Number of emails to customer first = 23,439

Emails responded to in 5 working days = 98%

Payments to our offices = 39,632

Electronic payments = 11,658

Payments over the phone = 23,117

This equates to Customer Services staff dealing with 217,645 transactions in a nine month period. In addition to this, the team deal with post, Freedom of Information (FOI) requests, media requests, complaints, on line applications and social media, so never a dull moment and ever increasing communication channels.

Crediton

Customer Service staff ceased to operate in market Chambers from 1 April 16. Information was provided to customers on how to make payments and all other enquiries in the run up to the office closing.

A fortnightly surgery will be provided to ensure there is still a face to face presence for those unable to contact us using other channels.

Tiverton

Due to recent reductions in staff in Communications and the closure of our office in Crediton more work will be handled in Tiverton over the phone, on line and in person.

We have just had the busiest period for the front line teams as housing, housing benefits and council tax issue their annual bills/statements to customers during March.

The teams in Tiverton and Crediton have coped very well with the introduction of the new garden waste scheme covering enquiries and administration of the permits. Over 6,000 were sold and issued to customers and the teams responded to enquiries as customers got used to the scheme. Work is still continuing with waste and ICT to ensure customers can renew their permits after 12 months. Further to this a flyer went out with the Council Tax bills reminding households of the garden waste scheme and this has generated a number of new permit sales.

The call centre deal with enquiries for elections, covering registration and the many varied enquiries that arise when there is an election.

Admin team

Have had a busy year administering the garden waste scheme, as staff are trained to help across all the customer service teams they also assisted with calls and reception, and have helped with Building Control scanning.

Communications

The Communications & Reputation Managers post has been made redundant, the duties are now shared with customer services and the Chief Executives Executive Assistant. There will also be a full time communications officer dealing with media and the web site.

Work on development of the website has continued, recently parish councils have received training on how to use the new website.

Looking forward we need to develop and improve our use of social media. The customer service team log all contacts from the media and send responses once the story has been approved by the relevant head of service.

Freedom of Information (FOI)

The administration of FOI moved to Customer services in 2015, this ensures all FOI requests are logged and monitored to ensure they are responded to on time. Further work is needed to publish data sets.

Revenues

Collections rates on target to meet this years PI's

1 April 15 to 31 December 15

Council tax collections = 83.4%

NDR collection = 80.59%

The Revenues team have a development programme and are working on implementation of e-billing, use of SMS (text messaging) and improving on line transactions to allow customers to contact us at times to suit them for things like change of address, direct debit requests and discount applications.

Complaints

In 2015 we introduced a new recording and monitoring system, work is continuing on developing reports.

Number of complaints 1 April 15 to 31 December 15

Complaints 200

Compliments 170

Comments 92

Human Resources (HR)/Payroll

HR is under increasing pressure due to the high number of reorganisations and restructures which have taken place due to financial constraints and managers being required to make savings. Consultations need to be conducted with all affected staff over a thirty day period and information needs to be shared, views collated and HR then works with the manager to respond to these comments. Once the reorganisations/restructures are finished there is a great deal of work to be done with issuing new contracts, sorting out possible redeployments and amending organisational charts, management responsibilities and associated areas such as Etarmis (flexi system). HR has had to provide particular support to the Planning area this year due to a high number of maternity leave requests and the subsequent backfilling of roles in an increasingly competitive market.

In Payroll there has been a change of personnel with the resignation of the Payroll Manager. The role was filled via an agency as there was some discussion given to partnership working with North Devon but this has not materialised and the role of Payroll Manager has now just been filled permanently. Work now needs to progress with the training of the new Payroll Manager as a system administrator as well as Payroll Manager for the HR/Payroll IT system.

For the next twelve months concentration will need to be on the job evaluation – is it fit for purpose. What can replace it?

The appraisal system is currently being reviewed.

There will also be a requirement to produce statistics on gender breakdown in respect of pay commencing 2017.

Next year is likely to be hard with a 1% pay rise on the table which will be wiped out by increased national insurance contributions. This will have a knock on effect in respect of recruitment which is already problematic in some areas of the Council.

Links with the Trade Union

The Head of HR and Development along with the previous Chief Executive held a monthly meeting with the recognised trade union Unison. The new Chief Executive has indicated that he would wish to continue these meetings.

The meetings are informal but they do allow a free exchange of views and thus enable a greater understanding on the part of the union as to why actions are taken but also from the senior management view a greater understanding of concerns of staff. The meetings have helped in the past to deal with matters before they become larger issues.

Learning and Development (L&D)

There have been some significant changes to the L&D team in the last few months with the Training Manager and Training Officer both leaving the Council. However, a new Learning and Development Manager has now started in post.

There was a further reduction in the training budget in 2015/16 to £90,000 General Fund. Training plans that had been produced clearly showed that this wasn't sufficient to meet the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and Health and Safety training requirements for the coming year so decisions were made early in the financial year to fund some training from alternative budgets.

In order to 'save' some money both training officers delivered some training in-house. They delivered 2 x Personal Safety @ Work workshops and WRAP training (externally), 3 Myers-Briggs Type Indicators (MBTI) workshops, 3 Team Development Days and WRAP (Workshop to Raise Awareness of Prevent – Prevent is the Prevention of terrorism) training. This saved us in the region of £7000 and earned us £500 (Delivering WRAP externally to 2 schools). The introduction of a Health & Safety Manager also allowed us to save in the region of £4000 in delivering Fire Warden and Manual Handling Training.

We continue to make use of free, quality training resources where we can and offered Mental Health Awareness Training and Team Leader Training via The Skills Network.

The coaching programme has continued to be a great success with over 75 colleagues who have benefited from the service. Currently we have 10 qualified

coaches who now manage themselves (supported by Head of HR and Development) following the departure of the Training Manager.

The overall focus of the year was Wellbeing of staff. An area considered crucial with the increasing workloads and reduction in staffing levels. Well-being and stress management are within an employer's overall 'duty of care' to its staff and are a major factor in performance and productivity. With that in mind we provided training for all Managers and staff on Stress Management and Mindfulness. We also ran a themed week during November (Stress Awareness Week) where we offered various stress relieving treatments including Head Massage, Reiki, Laughter Yoga and Reflexology. The week was so well received we have been asked if it would be possible for someone to come to Phoenix House on a regular basis to provide short treatments to staff (funded by themselves).

We had 8 colleagues graduate from the Chartered Management Institute (CMI) Level 5 Diploma programme this year. We have continued to run a level 3 programme this year which has been well supported. However, on review we don't feel that the CMI is necessarily flexible enough to deliver what we need from a Management Training Programme. With this in mind we have asked Crisp Professional Development to pull together a bespoke programme which we intend to roll out to all members of Management in 2016-17. They are delivering a pilot programme to the new Leisure MT starting in April.

Health & Safety

The service covers all Health & Safety all aspects of MDDC's services and activities. It ensures that the council complies with all current and emerging health, safety and welfare legislation by monitoring each services adherence to the legislation and approved codes of practise. The service also gives support to other services by carrying out reviews aimed at developing action plans to improve the health & safety within the workplace and share best practice wherever possible. It also supports the development of each service team by delivering specific health & safety training.

The service has to ensure MDDC's obligations under the Health & Safety at Works Act 1974 are implemented and monitored. It achieves this by making sure the general statutory requirements such as adherence to the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 and the more specialised Approved Codes of Practice for each service area are being met

The service has to ensure that MDDC is complying with all of its, legal requirements under the relevant legislation. It also has to support each service in minimising the impact of Civil Litigation by ensuring the initial risk assessments are of a high quality and accidents and incidents are investigated with the objective of creating a strong defence against litigation and also learning from them to reduce the potential for future claims.

Focus areas for 2015-16 were;

All Sites and Services

A review of current performance across the council has been carried out in the following areas and services; resulting in the development of either new or improved

action and training plans to ensure that MDDC is complying with the following regulations and service specific approved codes of practise

Regulations

- Fire Evacuation Plans (Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005)
- First Aid Provisions (Health and Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981) amended 2013
- Emergency Response Procedures (Management of Health & Safety Regulations 1999 section 8)
- Risk Assessments (Management of Health & Safety Regulations 1999 section 3)

The key areas for improvement were identified as being compliance to Fire Safety, First Aid provision in Phoenix House and Lone Working for employees working out of hours

High Risk Services

Due to the nature of the work the following areas were prioritised for Health and Safety Inspections. These have resulted in the Health & Safety Officer supporting the services in creating action plans aimed at resolving the issues highlighted.

- Street Scene
- Green Spaces
- Building Maintenance
- Leisure

Training

A reduction on the cost of training has been achieved by developing in-house training for the following,

- Fire warden
- Manual Handling
- Risk assessment
- Level 2 Awards in Health & Safety in the Workplace