

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet
Date: 24 February 2022
Subject: Corporate Services Portfolio
Portfolio Holder: Cllr Darshan Sunger

Recommending:

That the report of the Corporate Services Portfolio Holder be noted

People Team

Common Operating Model

Consultation and recruitment are still underway for the remaining teams/positions to finalise the restructure process;

- Legal Team – proposals for a new structure - consultation in February 2022
- Housing Asset and Property Team - service review - progressing to consultation
- Housing Strategy Team restructure - on hold pending further review

People Strategy 2020 – 2022

Attracting, On-Boarding and Retaining Talent

- iTrent - iRecruit Phase 2 – Letter templates for provisional offers of employment and reference requests are now “live” and being issued through the system. Contract templates will shortly follow and will be in the test environment in 2022.
- iTrent - iRecruit Phase 3 – Onboarding through iRecruit - the required upgrade was applied to the test system in December and normal system testing and user acceptance tests are underway. The build of the onboarding portal will begin in test in mid February with a launch expected mid-2022.
- Itrent have redesigned the Employee Self Service (ESS) module and this will be available to employees when the current upgrade is migrated to the “live” system
- Our exit interview questionnaire has been launched, the Register of Interests questionnaire has been delayed, the new launch date will be the 1st December (original date was the 1st October).
- Onboarding/Induction documentation is currently being reviewed to include any learnings through Covid and links to member induction documents. It will also be recommended that Democratic Services work with members to add more insight into role of a councillor, via video on Litmos LMS system.
- Onboarding Guide is being re-launched and re-communicated. New starters are contacted directly to be invited to HRBP Power Hours.

Developing our skills and behaviours

- Our eLearning system Litmos continues to be built. The team are investigating the use of features such as gamification, and links to Social media. We are working with Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) in the organisation to ensure compliance training is fully completed in essential areas i.e., Safeguarding, Health & Safety, Cyber Security. Customer Services are being trained to use Litmos to build tailored customer services key skills training to their team.
- Skill Pills & MS Teams sessions - A new series of Skill Pills is being run for all employees between Sept 21– Mar 22. These are 60–90 minute sessions accessible by all employees. They will cover a variety of topics to support hybrid working skills, wellbeing, resilience and mental health.
- A series of MS Teams training is being rolled out. These are 60-minute sessions, helping employees use all different elements of Teams. These are provided free by Microsoft.
- Excel skills is still our top requested training, so more courses are to be provided.
- In total we now have 32 Apprentices in the workforce. Our Public Sector target is 14. Aiming to support LGA National Apprenticeship Week (Feb 22) by creating videos of our apprentices in situ.

Engagement and Wellbeing project

- A Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) networking meeting will take place in November. MHFA's are being asked to refresh their role and support colleagues through the darker winter months, and emphasise the huge amount of support available via Perkbox
- Perkbox sign up is constant at 90.7% of the organisation, we have a total of 546 activated employees logged into the site to access the fantastic employee benefits and tools with over 7203 perk redemptions so far. The free monthly treat is the most popular downloaded perk with 823 redemptions followed by Tesco's 464 redemptions.
- Perkbox Celebration is going strong, and we are continuing to have overwhelming engagement on this platform with employees and managers thanking employees and teams for their hard work and significant achievements, and service delivery for our community.
- Our second Workbuzz survey opened in early December and closed on 24 December 2021, employees got the opportunity to tell us what's working well and make suggestions for improvements. Managers have now been sent the data from the survey which include engagement dashboards which filter through to you said, we did engagement for the future. We encourage our employees to complete the surveys and be an important part of organisational change at EFDC. We also encourage managers to check out their dashboards and raise awareness of the surveys in team meetings and 1-1's with employees.

Our Ways of Working (OWOW) – Creating Our Tomorrow

- Our employees are moving away from traditional styles of management and approaches, to more agile, creative ways of working, thinking and leadership. Embedding the changes that OWOW and the Accommodation Project started, empowering employees to evolve the culture of the organisation, ensuring we embed the changes and achieve the desired outcomes:
 - Embedding the Change - Assessing & Monitoring Adoption
 - Continued Employee Engagement and Wellbeing, including a Beyond the Pandemic Phase 2 survey for early 2022.
 - Enhancing skills and flexibility of our workforce – including Inspiring Great Performance and a refresh of EFDC Values & Behaviours
 - Inspiring Great Performance was presented to SLT in November. The option for a digital solution 'Clear Review' was chosen. This will be new project starting January 2022.

- Review of Collective Agreement, Terms and Conditions and Employee Consultation is ongoing. Will be drafting a Hybrid Working Policy

Internal Communications Strategy 2021 – 2023

- An internal communications strategy has been developed to enable effective engagement and communication with our employees so that they can flourish. The Strategy will help us take a fresh approach to internal communications and employee engagement, one that is flexible, intuitive and interactive.
- There are six key areas for development over the 3-year period, including content creation, corporate information platform, channels, engagement and insights, content management and recognising and celebrating success. Further details on the first 4 areas include;

1. Content creation and the introduction of Communication Ambassadors

- Internal communications has a good understanding of current content contributors and areas that need some development and plan to evolve those relationships over the coming months
- Officers are currently working on bringing together materials needed (publicity, protocols, video content/graphics) to launch the opportunity to become a Communication Ambassador to the organisation in March 2022

2. Supporting the development of a new corporate information platform

- The discovery phase for the organisation's new intranet/information platform, initial desk-based research into different solutions available was carried out in July
- The team have had meetings and initial conversations with potential providers to discuss platform functionality, price point and options
- The work to collate the information into an overview for the project sponsor and ICT will happen in January/February

3. Channels

- As part of the Civic Offices refit, five digital screens were installed (2 customers facing and 3 internal), Our brand-new digital signage is now LIVE with up-to-date content and employee news, graphics, video, meeting information, messaging, and BBC news updates
- A schedule of content for the digital signage has been developed and continues to be updated regularly

4. Employee engagement and insights

- A second WorkBuzz survey successfully launched in December 2021, with a significantly higher engagement rate than the first (50% of employees completed the survey)
- Engagement scores and high-level statistics for our wider management team was communicated in January. Managers have been encouraged to share the results with their employees. High level engagement score statistics will be communicated to the whole organisation in January
- Investigations are taking place to see how we the internal distribution of email newsletters can be improved - using an email marketing tool we already have access to internally called Mailchimp

Business Support

Local Land Charges (LLC)

- All LLC data has been successfully migrated to Northgate's Cloud environment.
- Data cleansing is ongoing, with data sets either being issued to HMLR or being updated by EFDC.
- HMLR have an internal meeting on 26th January to discuss the EFDC delivery plan and will meet with us shortly after.
- Once the delivery plan is issued to us, we will receive the first part of the transition payment. This payment is there to be used to resource the project to ensure we meet the delivery deadline, although there is nothing to say that we need to use the income in that way if we do not need to. The second part of the transition payment is issued when we go live; providing that we have met the delivery deadline.
- Once the Register is live, we will be responsible for maintaining our records which will migrate onto the HMLR Register. The LLC team will continue to be responsible for providing the responses to CON29 searches, which based on previous data, is estimated to be around 1720 requests per annum.

Projects

Purchase cards

- Business Support are currently responsible for managing purchase orders, invoices and payment runs across the Council and an opportunity has arisen to pilot the use of purchase cards for low value orders of up to £1000. Our data for the financial year 2019/20 tells us that around 63% of our purchases are low value.
- There are several benefits to using purchase cards; they will reduce the amount of time the overall ordering process takes, resulting in increased capacity for employees within Business Support and across the Council. Our suppliers will also get paid at the time of the order, rather than waiting for their invoices to be paid.

Print to Post

- The Council continues to migrate service areas over to the PSL print to post solution. Currently, multiple online training sessions are taking place to encourage more users to take up the solution.
- Overlapping with the portfolios for Customer & ICT and Democratic Services, work which aims to reduce the costs associated with printing/posting agendas, is underway. Currently the cost is approximately £25,000 per annum. Support and training are being put in place so that members can confidently opt out of receiving paper agendas/documents, using electronic means instead.

Accommodation - Concierge Project

- We have had multiple enquiries and bookings for the Conference Suite over the past few weeks, with bookings being made by the NHS, Citizens Advice Bureau and local community groups.

Soft Facilities Management

- The Corporate Cleaning contract for the Civic and Corporate estate tender has closed and a winning bidder has been identified. A Portfolio Holder Decision has agreed the outcome of the procurement process. The new contract will start February 2022.

Storage and Archiving

- Since Iron Mountain were awarded the contract to provide a storage, archiving and retrieval service for EFDC, transferring data inventory and boxes has successfully started. Epping Depot and a Housing property have been emptied, and work has started to empty NWA and the North Weald storage unit.

Multi-Functional Devices (MFD) replacement programme

- A project brief has been submitted to review the Council's current and future in-house printing requirements, undertake a procurement exercise and set out the ongoing contract management activities. The project proposes the following timeline;
 - By end November a high-level printer/scanning requirements list produced
 - Tender document and procurement approach – mid December
 - Competition – January 2022
 - Award and implementation of new solution – February 2022
 - Hand over to Business as usual – February/March 2022

Corporate Health and Safety

- All manager Risk Assessment training is nearing a successful end this March (slight delay due to COVID restrictions) launch of all new template and guidance will automatically follow and new Teams Group established for uploading and storage of service Risk Assessments. This programme will meet legislative compliance for the Council, safe systems of work, training and monitoring.
- Specific teams have undergone manual handling and first aid training with identified budget allocated for 2022/23. A new trainer has proved very successful and can deliver a multitude of courses required for H&S. This has enabled dates to be pre-booked at discounted costs for First Aid, Manual Handling, Conflict Management, Lone Working and Fire Safety.
- The Civic Office Incident Management Team is under review. As a result of the recent incident at Southend and concerns raised by some employees, a full security risk assessment of the Civic has taken place the outcome of which will be considered alongside any improvements for employee, Member, tenant and visitor safety.
- H&S policy is nearing completion with one or two supporting documents and/or policies. This will then be submitted to the Strategic Safety Group for sign off and placed on the Staff Intranet and a Teams Group to enable efficient and easy review in future
- Safety Advisory Groups (SAG) are already in progress for the EE & MV music festival at Lea Valley Showground in August. There are several events in the pipeline for the Epping District and lines of communications have been established between some parishes and other partners ahead of summer events that may have moderate to significant impacts for various areas. E.g. Queens Jubilee Weekend road closures and other events etc.

Contingency Planning

- There are overlaps with the last point above regarding the SAG's. Good relationships with all emergency services and partner agencies have been established to enable progressive planning and resilience for Epping Forest district. This includes the Corporation of London for cross border events and those on their property within the district.
- All Directors are now on the GOLD rota for the Council to deal with and initiate a response for emergencies whether internal or external. Further training for our GOLD and SILVER managers will be conducted this year.

- Recruitment for Emergency Shelter (Rest Centre) management to be carried out internally with training to follow, including tabletop exercises and live play as opportunities and resource allows. (Stansted airport has invited all LA's to take part in their AAIB renewal exercise later this year).

Business Continuity

- A small 'task and finish' group will be brought together in January 2022 to begin to look at the updates required for the Corporate Business Continuity Plan and individual service plans. Once plans are in place a timetable of annual tabletop exercises will be put into place which will test at least two services at a time on regular intervals.

Insurance

- Work continues to collate information required for the procurement of the insurance policies which will be in place for 1 July 2022.
- A new Motor Risk Group will be established to review our policies and procedures.