

Report to Council

Report of: Support Services Portfolio

Date: 5 November 2013

Portfolio Holder: Councillor H Ulkun

Recommending:

That the report of the Support Services Portfolio Holder be noted.

Individual Electoral Registration (IER)

There have been no major developments in connection with Individual Electoral Registration (IER) but officers are now working on an assessment of the additional resources required for:

- (a) the transitional phase between householder registration and full individual electoral registration; and
- (b) ongoing CSB requirements as to resources for individual electoral registration in the future.

These reviews will cover staffing, administrative costs and related matters.

Electoral Canvass 2013

The electoral register canvass is currently underway and by the date of the Council meeting first reminder notices will have been sent out to households where no response has so far been received.

There has been an encouraging response by the electorate to the automated response method (telephone, text or internet). In 2012, 15,000 electors responded by these methods over the whole canvass period. In the current canvass, so far 18,200 people have responded in that way. However, concerns still exist about a large number of households which continue to send in paper forms back to the office when they have no changes to make. These can be dealt with much more efficiently and cheaply by any of the methods mentioned above.

Review of Polling Stations

Proposals are being finalised to improve disabled access to two polling stations in the District to improve safety of access and the use of the premises by disabled people. Minor works will be undertaken at two locations the total cost being approximately £300.

The Returning Officer has noted that Faversham Hall, Chigwell Row hitherto used as a polling station in a common room on the ground floor is unlikely to be available for electoral use after the May 2014 elections because the premises are being altered to

provide two additional ground floor flats. It is likely therefore that for the General Election in 2015, a new polling station location will need to be found for the Chigwell Row area.

European Parliament/District Elections May 2014

There are no further developments to report in regard to these elections.

Apprenticeship Programme 2013

The Council is taking on nine corporate apprentices from 28 October. They will be on two year contracts with the opportunity to train, learn and develop, whilst earning a wage.

Two apprentices will be going through Construction Multi-trade Apprenticeships and will be placed in the Housing Repairs Team. They will be involved in learning a number of trades including brick laying, plastering and tiling.

Seven apprentices will be completing Business Administration Apprenticeships. These young people will have an excellent opportunity to work in a number of areas within the Council as they will be moving work placement area every six months.

The scheme is aimed at young people living within the district, between the ages of 16 -18 who have achieved minimum grade C in Maths, English and ICT GCSEs.

The Council has worked in partnership with both Epping Forest College and Harlow College to develop the programme. Essex Employability & Skills Intervention Team have also been extremely supportive in helping target any young people who were not in education or employment and recommending a long list of applicants.

There were 17 successful applicants who were required to complete a 10 day pre-employment training programme (run by Aspire Training). The course took them through; personal values, communication, team building, interview preparation and personal finance. We received very good feedback from the applicants in that the course had been an excellent experience and had really helped improve their overall confidence, and in particular their interview skills and approach to working in a team.

A total of 16 applicants were interviewed by the Council for a place on the Programme. The construction applicants were also required to complete a practical skills assessment at Harlow College as part of the recruitment process.

The unsuccessful applicants will continue to work with Aspire Training who will help them develop and Epping Forest College also have further interviews for Business Administration Apprenticeship vacancies in local companies and we are referring these applicants to the college for these opportunities.

We look forward to the nine apprentices joining the Council on 28 October for their corporate induction. Their programme will involve working towards their relevant NVQs linking to workplace activities and attending all appropriate corporate training.

Alongside support from their line manager and the Council's Learning & Development Manager they will also each have a dedicated mentor who will meet with them regularly to guide them with their learning and development.