

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet
Date: 17 December 2020
Subject: Customer and Corporate Support Services Portfolio
Portfolio Holder: Councillor S Kane

Recommending:

That the report of the Customer and Corporate Support 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 for ICT. Legal has yet to commence.

The Council needs to ensure that our services are aligned as effectively as possible so that we can deliver on our priorities and outcomes. Recognising there will always be change within Local Government that require structures to adapt, our intention is to continuously review our current services and ensure they are aligned to deliver the corporate plan and the new recovery actions.

This has necessitated some redistribution of service responsibility into functional groupings which in turn align to our priorities. Considering some recent resignations, we are now considering our phase two approach. This realignment is mainly within the Chief Operating Officer strategic area of accountability. This plan is being worked through and individuals impacted by this further service delivery realignment will be consulted with. Internal communications and updated OD chart will follow.

People Strategy 2020 – 2022

As part of the continued work within the People Strategy a new Learning Strategy ‘Putting Down Roots’ has been developed. The Learning Lifecycle is designed to show the development opportunities at all levels of the organisation at EFDC. The Strategy is underpinned with a detailed milestone plan including onboarding and induction. This also includes a comprehensive management and leadership development programme which aligns to the future needs of the organisation.

The Recruitment Strategy will be delivered in a phased approach over a 2-year period (2020/21). Phase one will see us go live with our current iTrent application, where workflows will be developed, automation introduced and a candidate booking system launched in February 2021. This will be followed by an additional two phased approach; both being delivered by May 2021.

The People Team continue to accelerate and build upon our Wellbeing agenda for employees. The Council is recognised for our internal efforts, being asked to consult, support and share our work with other councils to support building their employee wellbeing plans.

We have now launched our new benefits platform through Perkbox including an integrated EAP (Employee Assistance Programme), wellbeing platform and Perkbox Medical – access to an online GP 24/7. We have had a total of 78% uptake within our current employee establishment.

We have also launched our new employee engagement platform through Perkbox Insights on 1 November 2020. We have had 185 employees complete a short pulse survey with 115 verbatim comments left. So far, we have an overall engagement score of 3.6 out of 5 for the organisation which is a good score four weeks into launch.

We are launching the last part of our Perkbox offering, Perkbox Recognition, on 1 December 2020 shortly followed by 'Merry Perkmas' which will be our £20 employee voucher Christmas incentive (funded through the Civic Office mast rental income).

We have now trained 98% (up from 97% since the October update) of our managers on 'Mental Health for Managers' training through MHFA England (Mental Health First Aid) and have trained 32 MHFA Aiders for EFDC with an additional three Cohorts of employees currently training to become Mental Health First Aiders. We are on track to exceed our ambitious target of 1 in 10 trained by February 2021.

We have now launched our winter wellbeing initiative 'Keeping you a little bit warmer this winter'. This support guidance offers managers and employees hints and tips around winter wellbeing. We are now in design stages of a Winter wellbeing risk assessment for managers who may have certain employees/teams that require more bespoke support, this is due to launch in the coming weeks.

We have also developed a new essential training course for all managers on inclusion and unconscious bias. The target for completion is January 2021.

Work continues to assist the Accommodation Project and work alongside the accommodation team to support the 'Effective Flexibility' guidance tool, supporting a more agile mindset to working in different and remote ways.

Corporate Health and Safety

The electronic Accident / Incident reporting system has now been fully trialled, and the launch is planned for the beginning of December as part of a focussed Health & Safety communication campaign. The system will be able to monitor accident/incident/near miss investigations and analyse trends.

The Council has invested in 13 on-line Health & Safety courses. Six will be essential training and the other seven will be dependent on job role (to be determined by managers). We aim to launch the courses at the beginning of Jan 2021 with requirement for 6 essential courses to be completed by end of March 2021. Each on-line course will last approximately half hour with a multiple-choice test.

Our four construction apprentices have completed an essential Health & Safety in the Workplace training course with a further session to be delivered at Oakwood Hill Depot for the Fleet apprentice.

Risk Assessment Training material has been purchased and training dates are being organised, the delivery has been slightly delayed due to the second lockdown but this will be progressed as soon as possible. Work will continue on additional guidance and templates on other key areas including COSHH, Manual handling and the provision and use of PPE.

A Health & Safety liaison group has been set up for the Oakwood Hill Depot which includes representatives from all relevant EFDC Services (Facilities, Fleet, Grounds Maintenance) and Qualis. The aim of the group is to establish operational arrangements, emergency procedures and effective communication channels. A workplace transport and traffic management assessment took place on 19 Nov 2020 which reviewed the vehicle and yard transport, parking and pedestrian arrangements, officers are waiting for the result of this assessment.

To ensure our certificated first aiders are appropriately trained some First Aid training sessions have been delivered with further planned for January/February. The planned training schedule has been disrupted due to both lockdown periods and the respective restrictions.

Contingency Planning

A review of our Emergency Response plans is progressing. A 9 week on call rota has been agreed at Director level which will provide a GOLD officer to deal with any emergency either in the district or internal to the council with a tactical team who can be convened as necessary to deal with evacuation or business as usual issues. This plan will include links to the Emergency Media Plan, the ICT Disaster Recovery process and internal Business Continuity protocols. Training for Directors has been arranged for 26 November 2020 and training for other aspects of responding in an emergency has been arranged for January 2021

ICT

The improved governance processes around projects and service management are beginning to show benefits. There is now a clear view of the work that needs to be done within ICT, and the team are better able to prioritise and manage escalations. A new problem management process has been implemented to help to identify underlying root causes, so that the overall number of issues can be reduced. New Service Level Agreements (SLAs) have also been implemented to ensure a more realistic approach to dealing with issues raised with the Service Desk.

The new monthly ICT project governance process is now starting to reap benefits and resourcing issues are being addressed at a senior level to ensure the right projects are done first. To assist the process further project management resource is being considered to drive the chosen projects through to complete by the agreed timescales.

Work on the Accommodation Programme continues with ICT providing input in many areas including network provision, Audio Visual solutions, and new applications to support new ways of working, resource booking and equipment provision.

The formal consultation for the ICT team restructure is running to plan. The initial round of shortlisting and interviewing is complete. There has been a large impact on the team, and some staff have left the Council already. The process of advertising vacant roles to the suitable alternative employment register is now underway. Any vacant posts at the end of this process will be advertised externally. Resourcing issues are being dealt with and external support put in place to fill any gaps.

Business Support

Business Support, including Accounts Payable, are supporting the Revenues team with the Local Restrictions Grant (open) grant which covers businesses during the Tier 2 restrictions which ran for 19 days between 17 October and 4 November. Crucially, under Tier 2, businesses were not required to close, so this grant is for hospitality, accommodation and leisure businesses that remained open but were severely impacted by the restrictions on socialising. Business Support will also manage the online application process for the Additional Resources Grant (ARG) which will be available soon to businesses that have not necessarily closed due to the national restrictions but will be required to complete an online application form. The LRG grants are being issued now and the ARG grant will be initiated shortly.

The team continue to build a positive working relationship with HM Land Registry (MMLR), having biweekly project meetings to discuss progress on the data migration project. Also, the team have additional meetings with a MMLR Business Analyst to manage data extracts. The team are on track to migrate our data to the Land Registry in Q4 of 2020/21.

Business Support - Continuous Improvement

Business Support are currently reviewing the Council's printing and post practices. The aims of this project include;

- reducing printing volume in the Council to meet environmental policy;
- reducing costs;
- save physical space
- increase compliance with General Data Protection Regulations.

The team are on track to procure a supplier in December 2020 and implement the full programme by Q4 of 2020/21.

We continue to explore the management of incoming and outgoing correspondence for the organisation in line with the Service Plan. Currently incoming post is being reviewed to look at creating innovative ways to incorporate a modern, virtual way of working. This includes researching an external solution to scan EFDC post, index it and allocate it to the relevant Service area for actioning. This project is in its infancy and will hope to produce an effective and efficient solution to assist the Accommodation review and support new ways of working for the Council.

The team are also reviewing stationery held by the Council, looking at ways of reducing costs, reducing office space whilst supporting staff working from home. The launch of '**Scan it, Scrap it, Store it, Stop it**' was communicated to staff this month with Business Support leading the way. Equipment such as rulers, treasury tags, pencil sharpeners, hole punches and staplers are just a few of the items that will be re-homed to local charities and schools within the district. Over 95 boxes of old paperwork has been disposed of confidentially from storage at North Weald Airfield and another 350 boxes are due to be destroyed in the coming weeks. This project is to get staff thinking about scanning documents instead of keeping paper files, Scrap old expired documents, Store work electronically where possible and Stop it - how can processes be changed to prevent an excess of paper files. The team are on track to reduce stationery and storage by December 2020.

Our Freedom of Information request process is being reviewed. This includes;

- a new e-learning course for employees,
- a new IT system which incorporates a more effective way for our customer to engage with us and accountability of internal ownership to meet our timescales.

- Ensuring our website is up to date with information to prevent FOI's being made unnecessarily
- reviewing charges (within FOI guidance) with potential to generate a revenue stream from requests which are timely and large in volume to at least recover some of the time and effort spent on the requests.

This project is on track to be delivered in Q4 beginning of Q1 2021.