

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 17 December 2019

Subject: Business Services Portfolio

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Stavrou

Recommending:

That the report of the Business Services Portfolio Holder be noted

Accountancy

Budget 2020

November has been used to review in detail the Budget options for next year, especially the proposals for new developments that deliver the Council's priorities, particularly those in support of sustainable growth.

The draft budget will be made available to Democratic Services on the 13th December alongside the medium-term financial plan, the prudential borrowing indicators and a decision paper reflecting approaches to council tax rate setting.

Validation of all figures with Directors, Manager are currently being undertaken.

Financial Reporting

Accountancy have reviewed our reporting practices and have drafted a new monthly summary financial report and the second, October, version of the report will be available later this week.

Final Accounts

The work on our Final Accounts is almost completed and the external auditors are expected back before Christmas for the finalisation of their review. No significant changes to the figures reported to date are expected.

New Business Entities

The next stage of preparatory work has occurred regarding the set-up of a variety of business entities required to deliver developments and services in the future. Apart from registering the companies and registering them for taxes, bank accounts have now been set up and the finance/payroll system is being set-up and will be fully available in early January 2020.

People Strategy

Apprentices

Our apprentices continue to do well, all 7 of the current Business Administration cohort have passed their 12-week college induction and our Auto Mechanic Apprentice, Leona Canavan has passed her level 2 qualification and will start her

level 3. To develop their skills the apprentices are leading the Christmas Jumper day for charity, will be our ambassadors at the Careersfest at Epping College in the new year. Our higher apprentices have been involved in organising stakeholder events for Economic development and assisting with the Council's Employee Engagement Strategy.

Common Operating Model - Council Restructure

Officers continue to formally assimilate move staff into the new structure. Unfortunately, a small number of staff have been identified as at risk of redundancy. Relevant vacancies are being held for at risk employees to have an opportunity to apply for the roles before being widely advertised. All staff have the opportunity to access guidance on application and interview skills through an external careers portal, also the support of their Managers to assist staff through the process. The aim is for the majority of staff to know what their position is in the new structure before the Christmas/New Year break.

People Team

The new People Team structure has been drafted and costed. Consultation on the proposed structure with staff will start in the New Year.

ICT

The new ICT structure has been drafted and final costs are being agreed with accountancy. Consultation on the proposed structure with ICT employees will start in the New Year.

Officers are working on a timeline for the revised ICT Strategy.

Local Land Charges (LLC)/HM Land Registry (HMLR) Data Migration Project

Following on from LLC providing a data extract to HMLR, the Local Authority Delivery Manager from HMLR visited the Council on 21st November to provide feedback on the data extract and to discuss next steps. HMLR initially advised all local authorities that the migration programme for the whole of England would be three years; this has now been extended to eight years. The data feedback was positive overall and HMLR believe we are in a better starting position than most other authorities. As we have been proactive and volunteered to be in the pre-migration phase, we will be on the 2021 migration cohort.