

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet
Date: 30 July 2020
Subject: Customer and Corporate Support Portfolio
Portfolio Holder: Councillor S Kane

Recommending:

That the report of the Customer and Corporate Support Portfolio Holder be noted.

Apprentices

Our HR apprentice, Maggie Rankin, in the People Team, was awarded 'highly commended' for scoring in the top quartile of all apprentices in the Essex heat (4 March) for the East of England Local Government Apprentice of the Year 2020.

We are making excellent use of the Apprenticeship Levy by using the monies to offer 4 new apprenticeships in Housing. The Housing Careers Pathways programme (developed by Service Managers in Housing with support from the People Team) will mean EFDC offering fantastic opportunities for anyone of any age to join an exciting programme to launch a career in Housing, whilst studying for an accredited Chartered Institute of Housing Qualification. The vacancies will be advertised from the Summer and will include reaching out to our housing tenants to encourage them to apply.

The Apprenticeship Levy is also now being utilised for employees to gain qualifications in Town Planning and for a new specific design/ construction role in the Museum, Culture and Heritage area.

We are supporting our younger Business Admin and Customer Service apprentices, who are working virtually for the first time, with additional coaching and virtual training sessions on personal resilience and keeping motivated,

Common Operating Model - Council Restructure

Three senior management roles have now been appointed, final interviews took place 19 and 20 February. Andrew Small, Strategic Director joined our executive team on 4 May. Sacha Jevans was appointed as Strategic Director and Nick Dawe as the Chief Operating Officer.

Consultation is underway or about to take place for the remaining teams to finalise the restructure process. This has been put on hold during the Covid-19 pandemic to support teams affected (ICT, Legal and People Teams).

A continuing piece of work is underway, looking at the organisational design of EFDC. The aim of this work is to look at roles within the structure to align, build capacity, capability and deliver the strategic direction set out by the members and our Executive Team.

People Strategy 2020 – 2022

The new People Strategy for 2020 – 22 has been designed and launched. Members of both the Executive and Scrutiny functions were invited to a workshop on 5 March to discuss the proposed themes. The strategy was amended to incorporate the organisation leadership and member feedback. The new Strategy will support the organisation through change and the challenges ahead. The new Strategy implementation commenced from April 2020.

As part of the People Strategy we have now developed a new Recruitment Strategy that will be sent to Overview and Scrutiny on 16 July. The Employee Lifecycle is designed to show the aspirational candidate journey at EFDC and how the People Strategy touches a the employee throughout their employment. The Strategy is underpinned with a detailed milestone plan.

A Learning and Talent, Reward and Wellbeing strategy are to follow over the coming months as the People team work through the People Strategy.

During the Covid-19 pandemic the People Team have been working hard to ensure we accelerated the Wellbeing agenda for employees. We have launched our 'Let's get talking' wellbeing initiative, building a repository of mental wellbeing, financial and family support tools for employees, their friends and family members. We have shared these tools with members.

We are looking at further wellbeing initiatives to support managers and employees with mental health awareness to meet our ambitious target of 1 in 10 trained by January 2021.

We will also be launching a new EAP (Employee Assistance Programme) which enables employees to access online counselling, financial and legal support and much more. As part of this platform there will also be an integrated Wellbeing platform (Boxx) providing easy online access to mental and physical wellness programmes. All of this will all be easily accessible through our new benefits provider Perkbox. The launch of this platform is scheduled for 1 September 2020.

The People Team

The People Team are supporting the work on the Accommodation Project by providing policy updates and guidance packs supporting the Council's aim for our employees to work flexibly during and after the refurbishment of the Civic Office building.

The Team are also supporting the going live of Qualis Management with various workstreams one of which is the transfer of the Council's Housing Repairs employees to Qualis. Employees will be subject to the provisions of the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations, commonly known as TUPE. It is expected that the Housing Repairs employees will move to Qualis on 1 October 2020.

Corporate Health & Safety (H&S)

Corporate H&S is supporting officers across the organisation with COVID related PPE requirements needed for the recovery of external visits and services. Also, to ensure that government, NHS and Public Health England guidance is adhered to when resuming normal patterns of work where we are working and meeting with the general public.

There is now a new part time H&S officer adding resilience in this area, assisting the Corporate H&S Officer who also has responsibility for Contingency Planning for the district. Projects for the progression of H&S systems are on track regarding accident and incident reporting becoming an electronic based platform, risk assessments for all tasks and roles and most

importantly, work is being carried out to ensure essential training is updated and placed into a continuous improvement program.

Contingency Planning

Over the past few weeks, there has been several incidents that have involved various levels of input from contingency planning.

Over two days in June Essex Fire requested assistance to remove 10 full 50 Litre oil drums which had been fly tipped on public highway off the Sewardstone Road area. Our Officer liaised with the emergency services to make the contents safe for removal by the appropriate contractor via the Waste Management team. This was done swiftly following the report.

On 21st June a fire happened in Epping sadly resulting in a fatality. A major emergency was declared with several families evacuated from their homes on a potentially permanent basis as some were rental tenants and others owner/occupier. The Housing Team were instrumental in providing emergency accommodation at local hotels. Subsequent plans have been put into place across the county to deal with emergencies during the COVID 19 crisis in order to maintain, where feasible, the social distancing and segregation of family groups etc. this worked well and hotel rooms were provided under a countywide contract put together by the Essex Resilience Forum. Housing teams and local ward councillors are still providing ongoing support.

On 30 June Essex Police requested support from the Council during a high-risk missing person search across the Moreton/Ongar/Fyfield area. Our Officers provided support, along with two volunteers from the Salvation Army for volunteers, by providing shelter, refreshments and a rest muster point for the teams out in the search areas. This was gratefully received by Essex Police as it provided a well-earned break and refreshments as well as a 'moral boost' for the volunteers.

All food donated by the Salvation Army (all non perishable goods) was then later donated to Norway House families as it consisted of a good number of essentials and treats.

Currently the Contingency Planning/ Corporate Health & Safety Officer is reviewing all emergency procedures following employee changes to the organisation and learning points from all accidents above.