

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 29 October 2020

Subject: Customer and Corporate Support Services Portfolio

Portfolio Holder: Councillor S Kane

Recommending:

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

People Team

Apprentices

EFDC have been working with other authorities and SOLACE to develop a Level 5 Management Apprenticeship for local government. The Emerging Leaders programme offers an Institute of Leadership & Management Level 5 qualification for developing middle managers and covers a range of topics including Leading People, Managing People Finance, Project Management, Operational Management, Communications and Problem Solving/ Decision Making. EFDC has 7 employees starting this exciting programme in October 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 offers a great opportunity for anyone of any age to join the programme to launch a career in Housing, whilst studying for an accredited Chartered Institute of Housing Qualification. Housing Managers have appointed to all 4 apprenticeships who are due to start employment and their course on 2 November.

Our younger Business Admin and Customer Service apprentices are doing well in their Level 2 qualifications and are close to finishing in the next 6 months. They are in placements in Council Tax, The People Team, Housing Repairs, and the Museum. Our 2 Multi trade construction and electrical apprentices are now finally able to start their college course at New City College (after colleges were forced to shut through lockdown).

The Council currently has 23 apprentices in the organisation from Level 2 (GCSE level) to Level 6 (Degree level). This means we are far exceeding the Public Sector target of employing 2.3% of our workforce as apprentices (which equates to 15 apprentices).

Common Operating Model

Consultation is underway for the remaining teams to finalise the restructure process (ICT and Legal) the People Team consultation has now been concluded (Sept 2020) and appointments have been made. These final consultations had been put on hold during the Covid-19 pandemic to support teams affected.

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 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.

There are three phases of change taking place over the coming months, phase 1 has recently seen a realignment of services/functions so that corporate projects are delivered. This realignment has also considered the impact of support to Covid recovery projects and services moving across to Qualis.

People Strategy 2020 – 2022

As part of the People Strategy we have now developed a new Recruitment Strategy 'Candidate Journey' reviewed by 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 all employees throughout their employment. The Strategy is underpinned with a detailed milestone plan. The recruitment strategy will be delivered in a phased approach over a 2-year period.

During the Covid-19 pandemic and beyond the People Team continue to work hard to ensure we continue to accelerate and build upon our 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 continue to encourage feedback from employees on how we can build upon these tools really embracing our ethos of 'Our People and their Families Come First'.

We have trained 97% of our managers on 'Mental Health for Managers' training through MHFA England (Mental Health First Aid) and have four Cohorts of employees currently training to become Mental Health First Aiders. We continue to look at ways to further wellbeing initiatives to support managers and employees with mental health and are due to exceed our ambitious target of 1 in 10 trained by February 2021.

We are also in final stages and due to launch 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. There is a strong message of a wintertime mindset change associated with going into the winter months and the People Team have focused on more of this using study associated with a Norwegian approach to dark winter months.

The People Team

Assisting the Accommodation Project the People team have designed an organisational manager and employee 'Effective Flexibility' guidance tool to support a more agile mindset to working in different and remote ways. This is a follow on from our 'New Ways of Working' document produced and launched in January 2020.

Legal Team

The Legal team undertook it's Lexcel charter mark reassessment on 28th August and successfully retained its accreditation. Lexcel is an accreditation indicating quality in relation to legal practice management standards introduced by the Law Society.

Corporate Health and Safety

An electronic Accident / Incident reporting system is set to go live in mid-October for all employees with a proposed series of short training sessions for managers to be delivered via Teams. An Accident and Incident Guidance for Managers document has been developed which will enable a much more informative record of accidents and incidents with provision to upload pictures and documents to aid any potential investigation and to identify any trends.

Also, a procedure has been developed for Fatal/Serious Accident Investigations. This details the formation of an Incident Team and protocol for actions across the organisation to manage all aspects of the incident from the practicalities of the investigation to managing communications, employee liaison and welfare, enforcement authority liaison etc.

Mandatory training for H&S has been sourced and is in the process of being purchased; much uses our existing online provider for E learning and we have added a much more robust system to monitor and record when and who completes training therefore maintaining our duties under the H&S at Work etc Act 1974. Subjects will include H&S Induction, Fire Safety, DSE, Working at Height, Asbestos Awareness, Legionella Awareness, Manual Handling, Lone Working, COSHH, Electrical Safety, Driver Safety, PPE and Protection Against the Effects of Noise. All employees will be required to complete the H&S Induction course and Fire Safety courses with Managers identifying further courses relevant to the employee's duties.

Our construction apprentices are currently due to undertake a level 2 mandatory H&S training course which will ensure proper records as they move into their placement with Qualis Group.

A Strategic Safety Group has been established consisting of Executive Team, Service Directors, H&S leads and Union representation. This group will meet on a quarterly basis with a monthly written update. An Operational Safety Group consists of Service Manager level with H&S lead and Union representation.

Risk Assessment Guidance for Managers document has been updated with Generic, Person Specific (to cover staff at particular risk i.e. young persons and staff with specific health conditions or needs) and New and Expectant Mum's risk assessment templates. The templates will ensure that risk assessments are consistent across the organisation. Risk Assessment Training is being organised and the aim is that it will be delivered as group sessions for all managers by the end of 2020. Work is continuing on additional guidance and templates other key areas including COSHH and the provision and use of PPE.

Contingency Planning

A review of our Emergency Response plans is progressing. A 9 week on call rota has been agreed at Director level. This rota will provide a GOLD officer to deal with any emergency either external 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.

A date for Directors to attend GOLD officer and emergency response training is anticipated for mid-October in preparation for the plan and rota to go live.

There is also the intention for Teams/Zoom training sessions for staff volunteers who may be called to provide support to emergency rest centres and for Service Managers who would be expected to lead on tactical groups according to their expertise or service.

Rest Centre venues have been reviewed and a new list updated which will be annexed to the Emergency Response Plan.

There will also be an opportunity for interested Members to join a future Zoom session for awareness of emergency planning and how the Essex Resilience Forum works. Notification of this session will be included in the Members Bulletin.

ICT

With most staff working from home, the ICT team are supporting a more diverse environment than before. Service management improvements have been implemented, including using the service desk system (HOTH) for all tickets, so that there is better visibility of all issues and requests, and can be dealt with appropriately. A new Major Incident Management process has been implemented, with clear roles, communication and practical solutions to enable the team to operate with everyone at home.

Work on the Accommodation programme is in full flight including network provision, Audio Visual solutions, new applications to support new ways of working and equipment provision.

The formal consultation for the ICT team restructure has been re instigated. Appointments have been made for the 3 team manager roles, and the process for the rest of the team is underway, with interviews commencing in October.

An evaluation of members ICT equipment requirements is currently underway. This will help inform what needs to be done next to best support members and provide good ICT solutions.

The team have been actively working on setting up Qualis including transferring over employees, setting up equipment, and supporting new applications that will be used. This work will continue until Qualis implement their own ICT provision.

A list of all ICT projects has been collated and clarified. A new monthly ICT project governance process has been implemented with Service Directors, and this has already helped to prioritise the list, and agree which projects will continue. New projects will be clearly defined using a project brief and then prioritised by the governance group. This will enable the team to deliver the right project in a timely manner.

Business Support

The team continue to build a positive working relationship with HM Land Registry, 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.