

South Lakeland District Council
Council
18 December 2018
Executive Report – Mid Year 2018/19

Portfolio: Housing, People and Innovation Portfolio
Report from: Cllr Jonathan Brook

Portfolio Responsibilities

Implementing of the Local Plan and Council Plan housing objectives.

Working in partnership to improve the standard, availability and affordability of housing in the District to meet local needs, championing these issues at national, regional and sub-regional level.

The Council Plan objectives in relation to improved customer engagement and communication.

Looking at innovative ways of working.

The organisation of the Authority relating to the Council's central services including Employee relations.

To support the Leader of the Council and to deputise in his/her absence.

Policies, Plans and Strategies

- Local Plan (including Development Management Policies)
- Housing Strategy and Policy (including Choice Based Letting Allocation Policy)
- Customer Charter and Contact Strategy
- IT/ Information/ E Government Strategy
- Member Development and Training Plan
- Workforce Plan

Key Areas:

- Strategic Housing and delivery (including Housing Enabling and Housing Grants)
- Development Management and Building Control
- Housing Options and Homelessness Prevention
- Customer Services
- Customer Connect Programme
- IT Services
- Member Services
- Member Training and Development
- HR, Legal and Democratic Services

Strategic Housing and Delivery

The Housing service is expected to reach some record outputs in 2018/19 with Disabled Facilities Grant completions up by 115% and Handy Person scheme jobs up by 48%. This is in addition to the national extension of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) licensing from 1/10/18 which is expected to triple the number of licenses issued.

Throughout 2018/19 the Housing and Development Plans team will continue to work closely with private sector housing developers, housing associations and community-led housing groups to deliver more homes across the district. The Council remains on target to meet its 1000 new affordable homes to rent by 2025 target.

Plans to introduce a low-cost loan scheme to enable additional housing associations affordable homes is progressing. The details of the scheme were approved by Cabinet on November 28th and discussions are ongoing about progressing schemes.

Key documents and developments progressing in 2018/19 include:

- Publication of a new Homelessness Strategy
 - Publication of a Housing Supplementary Planning Document
 - Introduction of a new model for assessing housing needs in rural areas
 - Commissioning of a new private sector house condition survey
- Development Management and Building Control

Development Management and Building Control

The service is undergoing a data cleansing exercise in preparation for the Customer Connect Programme, this is due to be completed by February 2019.

The service has continued to reduce print costs and encourage digital working. Development Management has adopted digital working methods in connection with becoming 'paper light'.

The service has experienced some resourcing issues earlier in the year, which led to a temporary dip in performance. However, these resourcing issues have now been resolved and the quarter 2 performance statistics exceed government's statutory targets and was in line with the council's usual high performance in this area.

Homelessness Prevention

Following the implementation of the Homelessness Reduction Act in April, the second part of the Act came in to force in October with the new duty on prescribed public bodies having to refer potential or actual homeless cases to a local housing authority. This new duty is already being exercised by public bodies.

The review of how the service at Town View Fields is managed has now led to a new fob access entry system being installed, which will give residents the ability to enter and leave the hostel as and when they want, whilst freeing up staff's time to do other support duties instead of having to constantly let residents in and out of the building. A review of the staff's shifts and other working practices is under way. A capital project bid has been made in order to refurbish some additional temporary accommodation for families away from Town View Fields as it is no longer considered suitable to have families in temporary accommodation mixing with singles and couples.

The work on the new homelessness strategy is continuing with the evidence base having been completed and sessions with partners being undertaken in order to help finalise the

priorities for the completed strategy. Consultations with other partners and service users will also be undertaken.

The Council is currently making a joint bid with Eden District Council to receive a grant from the Government's private rented sector fund in order to extend the work done with property owners to lease properties and manage tenancies for customers of the Housing Options service and will know the outcome of this bid in early December.

Customer Connect Programme and Customer Services

Since the approval of the Business Case at the July Council the programme has commenced the implementation of Phase 1 of the programme. This includes recruitment to the core team to build capacity to deliver the activity in the work streams. The roles within the Service Redesign team have all been filled and training provided to those already in post. The HR team have recruited to their additional posts which has given the capacity to manage the consultation period for staff.

Formal Staff Consultation commenced on 16th October and concluded on 16th November. Training has been completed which includes Managing Change and Building Personal Resilience, support to complete the Expressions of Interest, pension arrangements and competency based interview techniques.

The core team have run a number of drop in sessions with staff throughout the period of consultation, giving staff an opportunity to ask questions around HR, the job families and service redesign.

Feedback and questions from these sessions have been collated and the programme team have responded to them, along with over 350 questions as part of the consultation.

The Change Champions Network has been established. Staff who are the programme's nominated Change Champions have received training for their role and are now supporting the programme, undertaking a piece of work to support the programme's transition planning. As part of the network, change champions will receive programme updates and have the opportunity to meet work stream leads.

A plan for engaging with the services on the redesigning of processes has been finalised, with the first of these workshops beginning in November.

We are nearing the technical sign off for the digital platform, this is where we will have created a template transaction that works 100% in line with the overarching design and is what will be used to replicate the functionality to other transactions that we configure as part of service redesign. Digital Development staff have been trained on the new platform and the next phase will be User Acceptance Testing of the functionality and confirmation of the look and feel of the portal.

Workshops have started with the supplier and Eden District Council to finalise the look and feel of the customer account. Transition planning, connectivity to Revenues and Benefits and also training and marketing/communication proposals is being planning.

Risks, issues and budget have been reported to Audit Committee in October and December and to the Customer Connect Steering Group for monitoring on a monthly bases.

IT Services

IT Services are continuing to work on the delivery of the Customer Connect Programme.

The service is continuing to make progress in preparing the Enterprise Digital Platform to support single customer records and online accounts. Initial focus is on enabling customers to access various accounts within Revenues and Benefits, this includes Council Tax, Business Rates, Benefits and Landlord.

A team of officers are also developing their skills so that they can configure the digital platform for other services and enable the services to operate through the online account as well as other channels we will continue to provide such as telephone and face to face.

The solutions being in the process of being built for Building Control, Planning and Land Charges will all operate in line with the Enterprise Design and allow interaction with customers through all channels.

IT services are working with Street Scene staff to support the procurement of a new IT Solution which will deliver IT in the CAB for Waste collections. This will provide a range of functionality to allow more streamlined processes to be introduced, all designed to enhance customer service and enable a more efficient way of working for all.

It is also working with a number of other suppliers to build the capability required for the Enterprise Digital Platform, this includes Geographical Information Systems and Document Management. Suppliers are developing their products to help us achieve what the council requires. The service will be able to exploit this capability repeatedly and in different ways as the Digital Platform develops and in line with the redesign of services.

HR Services

Since March 2018 the HR team have been heavily involved in the Customer Connect Programme in terms of the People, Change and Transition work streams. The team to date have accomplished the following:

- Agreed HR Principle
- Approved Redundancy Policy
- Produced a timeline of activity
- Provided leadership workshops
- Gained Council approval of the proposed Leadership Structure
- Held road shows held across different venues across the whole organisation which resulted in the new Personal Qualities Framework being developed
- Introduction of Change Champions
- Conducted Managing Change and Building Personal Resilience workshops
- Preparing for Competency-based Interview Workshops
- Completion of the consultation document which included the various processes to be undertaken to ensure we adopt a fair and transparent approach to structure and service redesign implantation (75 pages)
- New role profiles developed
- New competency-based interview process developed
- Consultation complete including 121's for affected employees
- Expressions of Interest for Voluntary Redundancy and Interest for roles in the new structure received
- Formal response regarding consultation feedback was released internally on 3 Dec
- Structured HR team in place working on Business as Usual activity and Customer Connect
- Organisational development work is commencing to look at skills required during transition

The HR team have been/continue to support all employees admirably during a programme of change.

As well as supporting the Customer Connect Programme the HR team are also continuing with business as usual.

Legal and Committee Services are continuing to provide advice and support across the organisation. The services is continuing to build on the use of the electronic case management system to support the new digital ways of working.

Committee Services have developed the committee agenda system (ModGov) to increase the number of officers and members working paperless and access committee agenda remotely. The system is automatically set up for with the relevant committees for individual members and allows them to make personal notes/ annotations/ comments as previously on paper copies.

Legal and Committee Services/ Member Services and Member Training and Development

Over the last few months, Legal has been providing significant support in relation to a number of key projects. They include the affordable housing loans scheme, the ERDF scheme (check if this is public knowledge), an innovative empty homes grant scheme and support for an upcoming complex planning appeal. Moving forward, the team will continue to offer support to all areas of the business on both operational and strategic matters so as to assist in ensuring effective business as usual during the transitional phase of Customer Connect.

Committee Services has continued to support all officers in embedding the report management system to ensure that the Council's business is transacted effectively. The team has commenced work on the annual calendar of meetings and the annual review of the Constitution.

The roll out of corporate kit has been implemented and in total, 38 out of 50 Members now use SLDC kit. Member Services are providing ongoing support and guidance to Members. The corporate kit enables all Members to access systems such as Skype for business and the Council's intranet and E-Learning and encourages paperless working supporting the Customer Connect Programme and new GDPR regulations.

On-going training sessions will be provided throughout 2018/19 and the team has commenced preparation for the training calendar for 2019/20, having taken on board feedback from Members.

All Members will continue to be offered various training opportunities throughout the upcoming financial year. During September to November 2018, Personal Development Plan meetings were offered to all Members through face to face or Skype meetings. To date, 7 of our Members have currently completed their PDPs.

The service will also be trialling and launching the Local Government Association Councillor E-Learning Package to allow Members to undertake training remotely. The Member Support Steering Group (MSSG), will be testing the e-learning site and offering their feedback at their next group meeting in January 2019, before the final package is rolled out to Members.