

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by Executive Director of Corporate Services

Corporate and Efficient Governance Committee: 22nd December 2010

Subject: Corporate Services Department Plan - Mid Year Performance Report

1 Purpose

- 1.1 To present the Corporate Services Department mid year performance report to the Elected Members. The report highlights the Department's performance across all services - Finance & ICT, Human Resources & Organisational Development, Legal, Administrative and Regulatory Services.

2 Background

- 2.1 The Performance Management Framework requires all directorates to monitor, review and formally report their departmental plan performance to the relevant committee/s on a twice yearly basis.
- 2.2 Corporate Services Department held its Mid Year Performance Review meeting in October 2010. The meeting provided the Directorate with an opportunity to review performance across all service areas operating within the Department.
- 2.3 Monitoring of the Corporate Services Department Plan 2010 – 2014 has taken place during departmental performance monthly review meetings. At these review meetings progress of actions, performance indicators and risks contained within the plan are monitored. With progress on the Assurance and Improvement Plan, the Best Value Improvement Plan, Freedom of information requests, health and safety statistics and absence statistics also being monitored.

3 Main Issues

- 3.1 The report set out progress on performance against the following areas.

Performance Indicators	(Appendix 1)
Corporate Services Actions	(Appendix 2)
Complaints	(Appendix 3)
Strategic Risks	(Appendix 4)

Performance

- 3.2 The Department has responsibility for reporting 43 performance indicators – 32 of which are annual and 11 quarterly. These are illustrated in Appendix 1.
- 3.3 Corporate Services has two of the Council's top five poorly performing statutory performance indicators - Cost of collecting Council Tax per dwelling and the proportion of those tenants giving up their tenancy during the year. These are being closely monitored and reported on a regular basis to the audit and performance committee. Both performance indicators have robust action plans

linked to support improvement.

- 3.4** In the first six months period, 16 of the 69 Corporate Services actions to deliver corporate and departmental objectives for 2010/11 have already been successfully completed. Of the remaining: 45 actions are on target, 4 on amber status and are being monitored and 4 are red status and explanations provided. These are illustrated in Appendix 2.

Complaints

- 3.5** There were a total of 35 formal complaints received in Corporate Services in the first six months of 2010/11. All of these complaints were acknowledged within 5 working days and replied to within 20 working days. The outcome of the complaints: 5 justified and an apology issued, 25 unjustified with an explanation issued, 1 unjustified with no action taken, 4 part justified with an apology issued to the customer. The nature and outcome on each of these complaints is detailed in appendix 5.

Freedom of Information

- 3.6** In the first six months there were a total of 270 Freedom of Information (FOI) requests, an increase from 155 in the same period last year. The FOI requests were received, actioned and replied to by Corporate Services Department, 18 of which were cross departmental requests co-ordinated by LARS on behalf of the Council. All of these were acknowledged on receipt and replied to within the limit of 20 working days specified by legislation.

Risks

- 3.7** There are 4 strategic risks with linked actions to mitigate, two scoring “green” and two scoring “amber”. The strategic risk register is being reviewed by the Corporate risk and performance team. There are 5 department risks identified by the Corporate Service Management Team. Each risk has a range of actions with milestones to mitigate the impact.

Both the department and the strategic risks are reviewed on a monthly basis and have positively progressed due to the achievement of linked department actions (appendix 4).

Absence Management

- 4** The effective management of absence is critical as those still at work often find themselves’ absorbing workloads for their absent colleagues, having a detrimental impact on morale and service delivery. There are considerable HR issues in managing a changing approach to attendance management. Continued commitment is required by trades unions and managers in the development and implementation of rigorous new policies, procedures and processes to ensure that absence is managed . We are in the process of developing our new approaches on a partnership basis.

4.1 Absence; Trend Analysis

For Local Government Employees, compared to the first 2 quarters of 2009/10, recorded absence for the same period decreased; Q1 & Q2 results were the lowest reported figures in the past 4 years for any quarters. If this trend continues overall absence will be lower than in the previous year, and the targeted reduction of .5 days for 2010/11 should be met. Continuation of this trend will result in improvements in absence rates in 2010/11

Teachers have shown an increase in the FTE days lost; over last 4 quarters. The increases can be related to absences for acute and recurring medical conditions. Improved reporting allows better analysis of the trend, and improved reporting may have also contributed to increased reporting, increasing the figures. However historically the absence rate is lower than that for Local Government Employees and as a council we are ranked as 18th out of 32.

4.2 Absence Durations

Analysing the sickness absence data shows that there has been a 40% reduction in the number of days lost due to long term sickness (absence over 4 weeks), compared to the same period last year.

Long term sickness is a significant factor for absence within all Departments and last quarter an Absence Management Action Plan was developed by Human Resources to address long term sickness.

Work has been undertaken to identify those employees who have been absent for 6 months or longer due to sickness absence.

4.3 Absence Reasons & Improving Responses to Absence

The top 4 reasons for sickness absence within the Council are outlined below, and responses in place or being developed are detailed below

Minor Illness - These ailments are normally self-limiting and little can be put in place to prevent employees from contracting these.

Acute Medical Conditions - includes heart attacks and strokes. Early referral to Occupational Health (OH) is being actively progressed by HR with each Department for detailed information on the likely duration and measures to assist employees to return to work.

Musculo-skeletal Conditions – employees benefit from referral to Physiotherapy Services provided by OH. This is used pro-actively to prevent employees from being absent by referral at onset of symptoms.

Stress - employees absent due to stress also benefit from early referral to OH. The Stress in the Workplace Policy, being reviewed, details the framework for supporting an employee suffering from both personal and work-related stress. A training programme is being developed for managers and employees; Promotion of stress management and the supports in place work in tandem with the Healthy Working Lives Group.

4.4 Other Developments

A new Maximising Attendance Policy is being developed and it is anticipated that this will be due for implementation by 31 March 2011.

Following review of the absence reporting and recording pilot, “*HR Connect*”, within Corporate Services and Chief Executive’s Department the new procedures for reporting and recording absence will continue. It is anticipated that the procedures will be rolled out across the Council in line with ongoing implementation of the Workforce Management System.

In light of the significant problem of long term sickness one of the key priorities for 2010 – 2011 is to identify long term critical cases i.e. those over 6 months, requiring immediate intervention in the first instance and to manage these cases in partnership with line management and HR Business Partners through the development and delivery of an Absence Management Action Plan.

5 Achievements

Corporate Services has delivered many achievements and improved its performance whilst implementing significant change programmes and improving efficiencies.

Finance & ICT

- Complete the final accounts 2009/10 by the statutory date, with a clean audit certificate and positive feedback from our external auditors (for both WDC and Valuation joint board Accounts)
- Successfully implemented the new Revenues and Benefits structure at a saving of £120,000 pa. The new structure creates an integrated Revenues and Benefits service across the Council area.
- Underwent an inspection of the Housing Benefit and Council Tax service. The inspection report produced by Audit Scotland was positive and commended the Council for many of its services.
- Developed and implemented a Rent Arrears Action Plan to address the levels of Council House rent arrears within the authority. Actions include a new sign up process, the automation of arrears recovery processes, the creation of Twilight and Intensive Action teams and the funding for a Debt Adviser to be located in the Arrears Team. Performance to date is ahead of the target profile for the year.
- Action taken has been successful, resulting in an increase of % of bacs payments (against cheques) to suppliers
- Development of early warning analysis & action within the creditors outstanding invoices has resulted in an increase in the SPI for creditors payments paid on time
- Completed action required for us to meet the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) deadline for the conversion of the 2009/10 final accounts
- Accelerated the budgeting process forward to allow Management and Members to take action earlier – helping the financial stability of the Council
- Introduced the new Investment regulations within the treasury cashflow function
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- Installation of Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) telephone system for Contact Centre – improved customer call handling

- Creation of Customer Relations posts for Housing Complaints/Commendations pilot – system development & complaints handling within Contact Centre
- Contact Centre assisting with development of Fire Reduction processes, including attendance at briefings for staff
- Successfully handled telephone contacts for General Election
- Successfully handled calls for Job Evaluation process following issue of appeals letter
- ICT and contact centre staff contributing to implementation of Civica hosted cash and income management systems
- Contributing to delivery of Fuel Poverty services with Social Work
- Successful home working pilot implemented proving the concept of using technology as an enabler, delivering corporate applications and telephony, securely, to the home. ICT and Contact centre staff continue to work from home and undertaking application upgrades (iWorld) as well as remote support and customer call handling. This included the expansion of technologies (Citrix server farm) to facilitate the delivery of applications (for example FleetMaster) to the home, whilst on the move or hot desking and as well as effective delivery of applications over low bandwidth connections
- Print and reprographics rationalisation including transfer of the former LARS Print Room Team into Finance & ICT
- Paylink has been integrated with Achieve Forms allowing members of the public to make payments for services in advance.
- Procurement of corporate Document Management System complete and implementation underway.
- Introduction of new ICT Change management procedures including system development, staff training and procedures.
- Successful procurement, implementation and training on Voice recording at Rosebery, Cochno, Overburn and Garshake.
- Contributed to successful implementation of new Workforce management system include BACS payment processing, printing development for payslips & cheques and interface development with Agresso Ledger.
- Saffron Service Charge to Agresso Interface including data integration, bulk upload of service charge data into Saffron, import into Agresso and Invoices printed & enveloped.
- Expansion of Corporate Address Gazetteer (CAG) property search functionality to display 'stock transfer properties' and associated CAG & Saffron UPRNs matched.
- Common Housing Register project tasks including CHR ITT finalised & advertised and evaluation of tender returns.
- Webuy/Seemis Interface developed and gone live.
- Introduction of Broadband upgrade into Social Work Care Homes replacing old ISDN systems, ongoing roll out, increasing performance and reducing costs
- Efficiency savings through migration of BT estate to cable wireless resulting in significant cost reductions and migration of core infrastructure from one supplier to another resulting in further efficiencies
- Video Conferencing introduced at Garshake and Rosebery Place sites
- Warranty & Power savings from consolidation and migration of 22 physical Windows Servers. Hardware savings from build of 7 x new Virtual (VM) servers
- Commissioned Voice and data infrastructure and integrated with existing Network for Bonhill PS, St.Eunans PS and Goldenhill PS
- Phone System upgraded using recycled equipment at St.Martin's PS/EEC
- Assessors server and Electoral application upgrade and migration to new updated platform. Additional work underway to upgrade the VJB Infrastructure resulting in significant savings for the VJB

- Successfully implemented technologies to link WDC and NHS systems across new NHS interconnect and planning additional services being tested.
- Introduction of a Single Request Form to replace and streamline the numerous ICT request forms previously available
- First Time Fix resolution for client requests logged with the ICT Service Desk increased from 14% to 34%
- Installation and setup of a new Unix Virtualised single server which is first stage in project to replace and reduce the existing Unix server estate
- Successful installation and operation of “Netbackup” facility , setup to carry out the backup and restore procedures of the corporate data and systems hosted on the ICT server estate
- New Mobile Contract signed and fully operational including introduction of new streamlined process and system in place for paying personal call element of mobile telephony costs
- New Asset Management & Licence Management software setup, configured and in testing phase
- Procedures introduced to reconcile Agresso and ICT Heat maintenance payments
- Centralisation of ICT staff to Purchasing & Creditors
- Setup and implementation of a centralised managed Power Management solution,
- Encryption solution and
- Anti Spyware solution
- Upgrade to National Building Standards system completed
- Printer Rationalisation – delivery of corporate savings through mini competition and identifying single printer supplier plus reduction in number and range of printers available in Garshake, Rosebery Place, Bridge street and numerous primary schools. Currently planning phase 2 project to continue project throughout all WDC locations.
- Successful merger and relocation of We Buy and Corporate Procurement teams and transfer of 2 purchasing staff from ICT.
- Implementation of We Buy in Education – in excess of 100 Educational Users trained on the system, 140 new suppliers brought on to the system, 1195 Purchase Orders raised with a value to date of £195,727.
- Purchasing Cards – 153 cards are live at the end of October in all Departments. Spend and usage has increased by 36% and 65% respectively between April and October 2010. Significant benefits have been achieved i.e. invoices removed from payment stream, reduction of petty cash balances, less cheques being raised, staff time savings, suppliers paid more quickly etc.
- Best Practice Tender Guidance has been prepared and issued to all procurement practitioners. It is also available on the intranet. Further guidance on other procurement practices will be issued soon.
- A Procurement Capability Assessment has been carried out and shows an improved position since 2009. Work has commenced on an action plan to address the areas requiring improvement.
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Human Resources & Organisational Development

- Successfully implemented 3 of the 5 payruns within the new Workforce Management System in the first half of the year and have since gone live with all payruns.
- Produced first Council Wide Workforce Plan and associated planning guidance;
- Developed and implemented a new integrated model of delivering HR and OD services. HR and OD Services were centralised on 1st April, followed up with payroll

services on 1st November. Transition arrangements are in place to support the delivery of services in a more streamlined and efficient way which harnesses new technology

- Arrangements in place to conclude the Job Evaluation Appeals process as part of implementation of the Single Status Agreement. This included an external review of the processes adopted by West Dunbartonshire Council and the subsequent issue of more detail on the outcome of the initial appeal to appellants.
- Implemented revised Job Evaluation processes post Pay Modernisation;
- Intensive case management of long term absence within Corporate Services and supporting a more holistic approach to positive and effective attendance management;
- 20% Reduction in Absence levels in Corporate Services compared to last year for first 5 months of 2010-2011 with a 62% Reduction in proportion of absence attributed to long term sickness (August 2009 to August 2010) in Corporate Services;
- Developed and implemented Redeployment & Restructuring Protocol and supported management of Voluntary Severance /Voluntary Early Retirement Scheme
- Revised and implemented a number of key HR Employment Policies to ensure compliance with legislation and best practice i.e. Discipline, Grievance & Dignity at Work Policies, and Trade Union Recognition and Facilities Agreement. Successfully developed and delivered managers briefing sessions in partnership with trades union representatives. Delivered Elected Member Training in conjunction with LARS to support Appeals Panel.
- Delivered joint recruitment programme in conjunction with NHS Greater Glasgow& Clyde to support introduction of CHCP.
- Successfully launched the Progressive Leadership programme for over 40 senior managers
- Designed and facilitated innovative staff and public budget consultation roadshows for over 650 staff and residents;
- Introduced a new in-house management development programme 'Introduction to Team Leading' in partnership with the Clyde Valley Shared Services Learning Group and with CMI accreditation
- Completion of the second phase of ILM Management Development programme's with over 70 managers achieving a recognised management qualification;
- Introduced a new approach to staff engagement using a 'pulse survey' approach as part of the culture change programme.

Legal, Administrative & Regulatory Services

- Registration Service accuracy rate for 2009 – 98 %. Our best performance across the service for years. Puts us in the top 10 in Scotland;
- Successful Transfer of District Court to Scottish Court Service;
- Adoption of ARTL (early adopted) and participation in National Case Study;
- Contributed to West Dunbartonshire Councils Green Dream, a month of eco events and promotions between 15 May and 18 June 2010, carrying out Idling Engine Patrols throughout the area and carrying out Vehicle Emission Testing;
- Carried out 243 Vehicle Emissions Tests on vehicles, 8 (3%) vehicles failed the emissions test, each failure was issued with a fixed penalty notice, every failed vehicle provided proof that repairs were carried out on their engines and all the Fixed Penalties were rescinded;
- Provided Grant Assistance of £8,383 to home owners/occupiers to improve their Private Water Supply systems;

- A cross-border investigation co-ordinated by Trading Standards last autumn led to Poundland being fined £7500 in April 2010 for selling plastic Halloween masks containing up to 95 times the amount of phthalate permitted by law. The company was fined £3000 for a similar offence the year previously;
- Working with the police and the Community Safety Partnership, Trading Standards launched its fourth and biggest Cold Calling Control Zone in July. Silverton in Dumbarton has around 900 homes and was identified by police as a hotspot for bogus caller activity; and
- Ashfaq Ahmed was fined £200 in August after selling a packet of cigarettes to a 16 year old boy in February 2009 from his shop in Fleming Avenue, Whitecrock
- Development of Pest Control system with ICT allowing Call Centre to log requests
- Development of Enforcement Policy for Regulatory Services and Licensing Board
- 99.64% of Private Landlords registered in 2009/10 – 2nd best achieving Council in Scotland
- Licensing Forum only Scottish forum to be invited to address Scottish Parliament regarding Alcohol Bill
- LARS received a Bronze Investors in People award 2009
- Charter Mark retained for Trading Standards and Registration 2009
- Trading Standards increased covert test purchases of tobacco with young volunteers by 700% since 2006/07 as a direct result of targeted additional funding
- All businesses surveyed at random said they were satisfied with the way Trading Standards inspected them and investigated complaints about them
- Successful handling of European Election involving new procedures and new software for postal voting
- New Liquor Licensing system successfully introduced with praise of Board's performance from practitioners, Licensing Forum and Kenny McAskill
- Licensing Boards new Overprovision Policy praised as innovative and a model for other Scottish Councils
- Registration customer surveys – 98% thought service excellent, 100% excellent in terms of helpfulness, fairness and sensitivity and 98% thought waiting times were very reasonable, all improvements – Registration accuracy rate for 2009 – 98.14%, putting WDC in the top 10 in Scotland

6 People Implications

- 6.1** There are no people implications.

7 Financial Implications

- 7.1** The period 6 BCR was reported to Council on 24 November and indicated the year to date position as a favourable variance of ££90,430. This favourable variance is anticipated to continue to the year end. Year end projections are currently under review and will be reported when agreed by departments

8 Risk Analysis

- 8.1** There are no immediate risks associated with this report. However, there would be risks to the reputation of the Department and the Council and to the quality of service delivery if performance targets were not to be met. Robust scrutiny of the Department's performance mitigates any such risk.

9 Equalities Impact

9.1 No significant issues were identified in a screening for potential equality impact of this report.

10 Conclusions and Officers' recommendation

10.1 During the period from April 2010 until September 2010 key performance indicators and supporting actions continue to be closely monitored and, where necessary, the appropriate corrective action taken.

10.2 The Elected Members are asked to note the contents of this report and the attached appendices.

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Appendices:

Performance Indicators	(Appendix 1)
Corporate Services Action Plan	(Appendix 2)
Complaints	(Appendix 3)
Strategic risks	(Appendix 4)

Background Papers: None.

Wards Affected: None.