

BUSINESS SUPPORT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

24 OCTOBER 2019

ATTENDANCE OF THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

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Summary

This report provides an overview of activities and progress made on work areas within the Business Management Portfolio, which fall within the remit of this Committee. This information is provided in relation to the Portfolio Holder for Business Management being held to account.

1. Background

1.1 The areas within the terms of reference of this Overview and Scrutiny Committee and covered by the Portfolio Holder for Business Management are:

- *Customer Contact;*
- *Democracy and Governance;*
- *Audit and Counter Fraud;*
- *Revenue and Benefits;*
- *Income Generation (including new Joint Ventures);*
- *Risk Management;*
- *Business Management;*
- *Commissioning, and;*
- *Medway Norse*

2. Customer Contact

- 2.1 Customer Contact, as was, is now part of Customer and Business Support (CABS), a new service launched on 2 October 2018, which also incorporates the former Business Administration Support Service (BASS). This report refers only to activities aligned to Customer Contact, as previously defined.
- 2.2 'Customer Contact' manages initial customer contact for the authority, through a dedicated leadership team and customer service professionals, allowing service specialists to focus on direct service delivery.
- 2.3 The contact centre is the first point of contact for advice and information for most council services including Revenues and Benefits, Social Care, Planning, Housing Solutions, Environmental, Waste, Highways, Pupil Services (School Admissions, Free School Meals and School Transport), and Medway Libraries Service. The contact centre fields somewhere in the region of 45,000 enquiries each month; the management team works closely with Business Change colleagues to help develop and promote online forms and information, offering customers a convenient alternative to the traditional phone call.
- 2.4 The service is also responsible for providing face to face housing benefit, council tax and housing solutions help and advice from Kingsley House in Gillingham. This facility assists c400 customers by appointment each month, with many more accommodated as 'drop-in' customers.
- 2.5 Customer satisfaction has performed reasonably well, achieving around 70% averaged 'general satisfaction' for the first 6 months of 18/19, and complaint response timeliness is achieving better than target, with 94% of replies sent on time, year to date. The situation remains under close surveillance and complaint categories continue to be monitored to give complete insight into customer feedback.
- 2.6 Supported by Macmillan Cancer Care, the service also provides welfare benefits advice for customers, their families and carers, in the ME1-ME8 (and some ME9) areas who are living with or beyond cancer, who need advice concerning benefits entitlement, helping to reduce their financial worries. The service has been extended to offer support to patients seen at the Kent Oncology Centre, Maidstone, regardless of their place of residence. Demand for this service has shown sustained growth and funding by the charity currently extended to 31 December 2020. For 2018/19 the service has secured an actual and assumed annual benefit gain for clients in excess £3.6m.
- 2.7 The service includes the management of interpreting and translation services in over 60 languages for the council and others through the Community Interpreting Service (CIS). This service has been part of Medway Council since it was formed in 1998, providing consistently high standard interpreting and translation services to the public sector and legal profession. In 2018-19, it processed approximately 750

requests per month utilising a pool of 161 interpreters and translators. CIS has a wide client base including NHS Medway, Swale, Dartford, Gravesham, Stanley and West Kent Clinical Commissioning Groups, NHS Commissioning Board, Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust, and other local authorities, mental health services, schools, solicitors and voluntary organisations.

- 2.8 The continued increase in services available online has reduced traditional telephony traffic, however the residual demand is still at a level that places the reduced resources at full capacity. A number of innovative projects are being used to continue to transform the service, including dynamic staff deployment, dual-skilling of a proportion of officers and continuous attention to improving processes (such as call-routing). CABS is a service committed to delivering the best possible service whilst collaborating with Business Change colleagues to continue to drive modernisation. The teams work collaboratively to continue to provide customers with ever-growing opportunities to benefit from online facilities where appropriate. The service also remains committed to providing assisted digital support to customers who need this, many of whom were informally helped to access council forms and services, both over the 'phone and face to face at Kingsley House.

3. Democracy and Governance

3.1 Electoral Services

a) Local and Parish elections and European Parliamentary elections May 2019

- 3.1.1 The Local and Parish elections went extremely successfully with nearly 300 candidate nomination papers being processed over a 7 day period and the election count being conducted particularly efficiently with results being announced earlier than on previous occasions.
- 3.1.2 The average turnout across all Wards was 31.27% although it varied between 24.4% and 39.1%. This compares poorly with the 63.71% in 2015 but those elections were combined with a General Election where higher turnouts are expected.
- 3.1.3 No-one was expecting the European Parliamentary elections to be held this year so when formal notification was received on 5 April that they would take place, officers had less than 30 working days' notice that they would be held on 23 May and were at a crucial stage of the election timetable for the Local and Parish elections.
- 3.1.4 Despite the challenges, all elections were conducted successfully, including the particular complications of the registration requirements of EU citizens for the European Parliamentary elections who have to complete a separate form to confirm that they will vote in this country. The turnout was 33.32%.

b) Electoral registration

- 3.1.5 The annual canvass started in July and the response rate to date is 79.34 [as at 27 Sept] a 3% increase on the same time last year.
- 3.1.6 Householders are able to respond by text message (SMS), via a 24/7 automated telephone line or a secure web page online as well as returning the paper form.
- 3.1.7 We have continued to see an increase in the numbers of people using the automated response methods – accounting for 55% of all responses as at 28 September compared with 54% at the same time last year. That represents approximately an additional 1000 households using the automated service. As well as tweaking the payment schedule for canvassers to reward encouragement of the automated response services rather than paper responses, it is thought that the extensive social media campaign has contributed towards this increase.
- 3.1.8 Personal canvassers started visits to non-responding properties from 6 September. They will make a minimum of three visits at different times of the day, evening, and weekends to maximise the chances of finding a householder in occupation.

c) Review of polling districts, polling places and polling stations

- 3.1.9 In the light of comments received after the Local and European Parliamentary elections in May, officers have undertaken a review of polling stations and drafted proposals for some changes to take account of buildings that will not be available or are not suitable. These will be considered by the Informal Working Group on Polling Places and Polling Districts whose recommendations will be submitted to Full Council in January 2020. These recommendations will not affect the boundaries of polling districts. It is intended that the changes to polling stations would come into effect for any unscheduled General Election that may be called prior to January 2020 as they have the support of Ward Councillors and do not require the approval of Council.

d) Ward Boundary Review

- 3.1.10 Council at its meeting in February 2019 received a report outlining the arrangements and timetable for a boundary review by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) from 2019 onwards. At that meeting Council established a cross-party Ward Boundary review working group to progress the review and report back to Council.
- 3.1.11 The first issues to be determined as part of the review, is the Council size and the forecast electorate for 2025 including housing developments that are likely to be built and occupied.
- 3.1.12 The working group has agreed the electorate forecast for 2025 and the methodology of calculating it.

- 3.1.13 Officers have submitted the electorate forecast and various other pieces of information and data required by the Commission including a geocoded register of properties, Ward and Parish maps and a stakeholder database for the Commission to use during the consultation part of the process.
- 3.1.14 Full Council on 10 October approved the [Council size submission](#) compiled and recommended by the Working Group, which will now be submitted to the Commission by 15 October. It is expected that the Commission will make its decision on Council size by 26 November and then start the consultation part of the process when interested individuals and organisations can submit warding proposals. This phase will continue until February 2020.

e) Member and Mayoral Services

- 3.1.15 The team, in conjunction with colleagues in Workforce Development co-ordinated the Welcome Session and comprehensive induction programme for Councillors after the Local elections. Whilst primarily aimed at the 18 new Councillors elected, most sessions were open to all members to attend so they could refresh their knowledge and share experiences.
- 3.1.16 A total of 32 sessions were held for Members and 620 Councillors attended them.
- 3.1.17 The Member Development Advisory Group have considered the attendance levels, evaluation forms from those sessions as well as more informal feedback which has been extremely positive whilst making suggestions for next time.
- 3.1.18 Officers are continuing to contribute to development and delivery of the ongoing member development programme in conjunction with the Member Development Advisory Group. These are likely to be in the format of briefings on subjects of interest to Councillors but, subject to funding and Members' interest, will also offer skills-based training.
- 3.1.19 The team were also responsible for the successful co-ordination of the arrangements for the formal decision by Full Council to award Freedom to the Ship and Crew of HMS Medway in January this year. Officers then worked with colleagues in the Regeneration, Culture, Environment and Transformation Division, to successfully organise the recent 6 day visit by the Ship and Crew of HMS Medway. This included the production of the Freedom scroll, the well-received Parade through Chatham and a post-Parade reception for the Parade participants. The Ship and Crew can be in no doubt of the people of Medway's admiration for and support of their work in protecting all of us and we look forward to a long and fruitful collaboration with the Ship.
- 3.1.20 The team have planned and successfully completed arrangements for key annual Mayoral and civic events including the Dedication Service, Admiralty Court and the Admirals Cruise and are working on

arrangements for the French Memorial Service and Remembrance Services and luncheon for the outgoing and incoming High Sheriff of Kent as well as a range of events to raise funds for the Mayors charities. The Mayor has also raised the profile of Medway by hosting civic visits to highlight the attractions in Rochester, the Copper Rivet distillery and the Royal Engineers Museum.

3.1.21 In the period from the start of this Mayoral year to the end of September 2019 the team have successfully planned and supported 124 Mayoral diary engagements.

3.1.22 Officers have co-ordinated and supported the Independent Remuneration Panel in undertaking its 4 yearly review of the Members Allowances Scheme. The Panel submitted their report to Full Council on 10 October where Members approved the [Panel's recommendations](#).

3.2 Democratic Services

3.2.1 The Democratic Services Team supports a wide range of meetings including full Council, Cabinet, Overview and Scrutiny Committees, Task Groups set up to conduct in-depth scrutiny reviews, other Committees established by the Council including the Audit Committee, Planning Committee, Licensing and Safety Committee and the Health and Wellbeing Board, School Admission Appeals and Exclusion Reviews.

3.2.2 The team also leads on the management of public engagement in formal meetings, maintenance of, and revisions to, the Council's Constitution, administration of representation on outside bodies and the Council's electronic Committee Management System (modern.gov).

3.2.3 In addition to dealing with day to day operational priorities significant achievements by the Service over the last year have included:

- a significant role in design and delivery of the Member Induction programme and all the post- election formalities including support for new members with registration of interests, work with Group Whips on the allocation of Committee seats in light of the new political balance of the Council and the arrangements for the Annual Council meeting in May.
- Continued support for Councillors who are keen to embrace electronic access to papers for meetings. Around 50% of Councillors are now fully or partially paperless.
- Launch of a Member Portal after the local elections providing instant electronic access to a range of information. It is hoped this will develop to become a key resource for elected Members.
- Development of the format and content of a number of the Member Induction sessions including sessions on How the Council works, The Code of Conduct and an Introduction to Overview and Scrutiny. A session designed to assist members to develop scrutiny skills was also commissioned by the team with positive feedback from participating Members.

- development of the case to support the Member decision to request an increase in Council size as part of the ward boundary review
- a review of Medway's scrutiny arrangements in the context of the new statutory scrutiny guidance published in the Summer which has generated some areas for further development including closer working on scrutiny with local experts such as our Universities, development of the framework for scrutiny of commercialisation and the Local Enterprise Partnership.
- Support for the Task Group on Social Isolation which concluded its work in December 2018. All the Task Group recommendations were subsequently accepted by Cabinet. The Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee will shortly complete its in-depth scrutiny of the voluntary and community sector following which a Task Group on Physical Activity will commence.
- Achievement of two awards under the 2019 Make a Difference Awards; two Democratic Services Officers (DSOs) won the Business Support Department award for Inclusion and Diversity and another DSO was highly commended in the Partnership working category for her work in supporting the new Joint Kent and Medway Health and Wellbeing Board.

4. Audit and Counter Fraud

- 4.1 The Audit and Counter Fraud Shared Service has been in operation since 1 March 2016, providing internal audit, counter fraud and investigation services to Medway Council and Gravesham Borough Council. The team operates under a [Charter](#) that sets out its purpose, authority and responsibilities to deliver audit work, including rights of access. The team also maintains a [Quality Assurance and Improvement Plan](#) (QAIP) that is used to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the overall Service and identify areas for improvement. Both of these documents are reviewed annually and the most recent review of the Charter was taken to Audit Committee for approval in March 2019, with the QAIP being approved in January 2019.
- 4.2 The Counter Fraud function of the service was subject to an independent audit review, conducted by officers from Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council. The review looked at five key areas and led to an overall opinion rating of *Adequate - The system of control is sufficiently sound to manage key risks. However, there were weaknesses in internal control and/or evidence of a level of non-compliance with some controls that may put system/service objectives at risk*. Recommendations relating to Fraud awareness training, fraud risk assessments across council services and alignment of policies and strategies are being implemented.
- 4.3 The latest [annual report](#) for the Audit and Counter Fraud Shared Service was presented to Audit Committee in June 2019, with performance against key targets as follows;
- 97% of the agreed assurance work delivered (target 95%);
 - 98% of recommendations agreed by client management (target 90%);

- 88% of available resources spent on productive work (target 90%); and
 - £22,090 of historic Council tax identified (resulting in additional £10,550pa in future years), £51,502 business rates owed due to the removal of small business rate relief, notional savings of £40,000 linked to two council properties being recovered and a waiting list removal, and the loss of £3,926 linked to a suspect application under no recourse to public funds, all resulting from investigative activity.
- 4.4 There has been some staff turnover during the last 12 months. The flexible retirement of one officer left 1FTE post in the establishment. Following a recruitment exercise, the team's Intelligence Analyst was successfully offered the post, which resulted in a further recruitment for a new Intelligence Analyst, who commenced work on 9 September 2019. The officer who originally took flexible retirement, and reduced hours, retired completely on 31 August 2019. The team's establishment of 14 is now staffed by 13.64FTE as of September 2019.
- 4.5 A new [annual work plan](#) for 2019-20 was also approved by the Audit Committee in March 2019. The unexpected vacancy for the Intelligence Analyst between June and September and sickness within the team has reduced the level of resource available when compared to the original projection used in the planning process.
- 4.6 Update reports are presented to the Audit Committee four times each year. These set out the progress made on delivering the plan and present the findings of all audit and investigation activities completed in the period; including where team members have supported the Council on projects and working groups, and by providing consultancy support, advice and information to the wider Council. The reports also provide details of the team's performance against its performance measures. The [September 2019 update](#), which covered the period 01 April to 31 August, reported that:
- 39% of the agreed plan underway or completed;
 - 85% of the team's resources had been spent on productive work; and
 - 100% of the recommendations made by the team had been agreed by client management, with 57.5% of those having been implemented by the date agreed in the final report.
- 4.7 Following the OFSTED inspection of Children's Services, the Audit & Counter Fraud plan will be amended to respond to the changing risk environment. This will result in some of the planned 2019-20 audits that are considered to be of less priority being deferred to 2020-21 to allow for alternative reviews to be undertaken in Children's Services; the first of which is already underway.
- 4.8 In December the team will begin to start the planning process to prepare the work plan for 2019-20.

5. Revenue and Benefits

a) Council Tax

- 5.1 Aside from the day to day processes necessary to keep up collection rates a number of transformation projects are being progressed by council tax officers together with colleagues in the Transformation team (see paragraphs 5.11-5.15).
- 5.2 Collection of the 2019/20 council tax stood at 54.70% as at 30/09/19 compared to 54.85% of the 2018/19 council tax collected as at 30/09/18 which resulted in a collection rate of 95.53% at 31/03/19.
- 5.3 Following a data matching exercise and as part of the annual National Fraud Initiative the sum of £126,000 has been recharged against individual council tax accounts where a single person discount was not applicable.

b) Business Rates

- 5.4 Collection of the 2019/20 business rates stood at 58.26% as at 30/09/19 compared to 56.93% of the 2018/19 business rates collected as at 30/09/18 The latter resulted in a collection rate of 97.43% at 31/03/19.
- 5.5 The Council participated with all Kent authorities in a pilot of 100% Business Rate Retention in 2018/19. For 2019/20 the Council receives 49% of all monies received.
- 5.6 The service has been working with colleagues from the Regeneration team with a view to maximising potential business rate income. In particular significant work was undertaken concerning estimating potential income from Innovation Park Medway (Enterprise zone).

c) Benefits

- 5.7 The number of days taken to process claims (combined i.e. Housing Benefit and Council Tax reduction scheme) as at 30/09/19 averaged 10.92 days for the current financial year compared to 10.15 days as at 30/09/18.
- 5.8 The biggest change to the Benefit system for 30 years saw the go-live of Universal Credit in Medway from May 2018. Consequently, since that date the majority of new claims are now dealt with by the Department for Works and Pensions leaving the service with those cases which are more complex and time-consuming in nature. Despite this the service continues to have a strong working partnership in place both internally (various sections working together) and externally with the local Job Centre Plus Chatham office part of Department for Work and Pensions. This continues to be recognised nationally as an example of best practice as 'two teams from two organisations with one aim'.

- 5.9 Personal budgeting support to assist customers which was last year delivered by the Revenues and Benefits service has now reverted to the Citizens Advice Bureau in accordance with national directives.
- 5.10 Assisted digital support has been provided throughout the libraries and hubs.

d) Transformation

- 5.11 The Revenues & Benefits section continues to embrace the transformation agenda in response to a constantly changing environment which is highly legislated.
- 5.12 The IT support contract with its partners Sopra Steria ended on 30/04/19. This provided an ideal opportunity to consolidate the complex network of systems to support its function in the future including options for a cloud based revenues and benefits system. Consequently, the service worked closely with the transformation team in devising both a Transition programme and a Transformation project road map to realise the vision of fully transforming the service to a paperless, fully automated, service to the residents of Medway.
- 5.13 The Transition programme included the review of the following which were provided by Sopra Steria :-
- Document Image Processing and workflow system
 - Scanning and Indexing service
 - Database administration and application support
- 5.14 Consequently, the service has:
- Procured the Northgate Enterprise Document Image Processing and workflow system which seamlessly integrates with the core Revenues and Benefits system 'IWorld'. This resulted in over six million documents being migrated in six weeks to the new system in an innovative way utilising '(Ro)bots'. The system went live on 12/08/2019
 - Sopra Steria scanning and indexing team (3.6 FTE) were successfully transferred to the Revenues and Benefits service
 - Electronic forms covering wide ranging applications in Revenues and Benefits were made mobile responsive
 - Benefit Risk Based Verification went live on 05/11/2018. This has streamlined processes.
 - Contracted Northgate Public Services to host the core Revenues and Benefits system in the cloud 'software as a service' (SaaS) which is due to go live in November. This service will include a landlord portal enabling landlords to check benefit claims of tenants and thereby remove the necessity of sending paper remittances.
- 5.15 The Council entered into a shared management arrangement for the Revenues and Benefits service with Gravesham Borough Council on 01/10/2019.

6. Income Generation

6.1 Corporate Debt

6.1.1 The Revenues and Benefits service continues to build on work undertaken by its previously outsourced IT provider Sopra Steria. It has identified a number of opportunities where the Council can reap benefits from the adoption of corporate debt recovery approach. These include Housing Benefit Overpayments, Parking Fines, Social Care, and Sundry Debts. A Corporate Debt Manager was seconded from 01/04/2019 for a period of 12 months. The pilot has proven successful with the intention for the post to become permanent and based within the Revenues and Benefits service from 2020/21. There are indications that the corporate debt project initiatives are having success whilst others are showing a brighter future. One of the key objectives of the corporate debt team was to achieve a clearer understanding of the Council's overall debt. This has been overcome by devising dashboards which are now available to all budget managers

6.1.2 Significant work has been undertaken on cleansing data in respect of sundry debts. The Corporate Debt Manager has been working with the finance operations systems team and are designing electronic forms that capture and manage invoice generation in a more organised and accurate way (e.g. Invoice requests will need to be submitted including evidence of the agreement to pay). New processes have been designed with a clear way to corporately managing disputed invoices including:

- specific 'cycle codes' (which will identify how the recovery of a debt will proceed) for commercial debt; non-commercial-debt; vulnerable debtors and small balances to be built within Integra.
- An e-statement of account being issued to customers.
- An e-form devised to ensure a consistent setup of debtors within Integra ensuring quality data is provided in the first instance to enable efficient recovery of any non-payment later in the process.

6.1.3 Meetings have been undertaken by the Corporate Debt team with various services across the Council concerning sundry debt. This has significantly helped the council focus on the way that debt is collected by reviewing collection processes and utilising 'best practice'.

6.1.4 Housing Benefit Overpayments are extremely difficult monies to collect. Where specific benefits are still in payment deductions are made at a set rate (currently £11.10 per week or £18.50 per week where fraud proven). However, where benefit is no longer in payment a debtor's invoice is raised and recovery action is similar to sundry debt. Recently, the Council has obtained additional powers specifically for these types of debts by applying for employment details from the Department for Works and Pensions. This resulted in the outstanding debt reducing by

£500,000 during 2018/19. The current year is showing a further £300,000 reduction for the period 01/04/2019 to 30/09/2019

- 6.1.5 The introduction of the Digital Economy Act 2017 s52 (Debt) provides for a Code of Practice to cover the disclosure and use of information between Government Departments and local authorities for debt and fraud purposes. Consequently, a business case was submitted by the Council working with the Cabinet Office for obtaining employment details from Her Majesty's Revenues & Customs in respect of Council Tax arrears where we hold a relevant liability (court) order. This bid to be a pilot scheme was successful. In fact it was so successful that the Cabinet Office extended this to a further 29 authorities. The service has since received employment data from HMRC with potential attachment of earnings being served on the debtors employer for 1688 cases totalling £3.5m of debt. An attachment of earnings order is where monies are deducted at source by the employer and passed onto the Council. This will provide a significant boost to council tax collection.
- 6.1.6 The contract for collection of council tax and business rates by enforcement agents was awarded in January 2019 and is due to expire in July 2021. The Revenues and Benefits service ensured that the new enforcement agent contract aligned with the expiry date of the parking fines contract. Future contracts will then cover the collection of parking fines, council tax, and business rates plus other corporate debts thereby ensuring synergy by having the same enforcement agent collecting various debts at the same time.

7. Risk Management

- 7.1 Risk management is an iterative process which aims to help the Council understand, evaluate and take action on all their risks. It supports effective decision making, identification of priorities and objectives and increases the probability of success by making the most of opportunities and reducing the likelihood of failure.
- 7.2 We have had a Risk Management Strategy in place for many years which:
- promotes a common understanding of risk;
 - outlines roles and responsibilities across the Council;
 - proposes a methodology that identifies and manages risk in accordance with best practice thereby seeking to prevent injury, damage and loss.
- 7.3 Risk management is applied at all levels of management and service delivery. This enables the effective use of resources; helps secure the assets of the organisation and continued financial and organisational well-being.
- 7.4 The Risk Management Strategy sets out an objective method for analysing risks taking into consideration the likelihood of the risk occurring and the impact should the risk manifest. The Risk

Management Strategy also states the Council's agreed tolerance level for risks. The Risk Management Strategy is reviewed annually to ensure that it remains up to date and continues to reflect the Council's approach to risk management. The Risk Management Strategy is reviewed by the Strategic Risk Management Group, Corporate Management Team, Audit Committee, Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet.

7.5 The latest [review](#) has been considered by the Audit Committee on 26 September 2019. This review brings the Risk Management Strategy in line with the International Standard in Risk Management (ISO 31000:2018(E)) which provides a common approach to managing any type of risk and can be applied to any activity. The review brings about a greater focus on the opportunity side of risk, clarifies roles and responsibilities in place and updates the format to be consistent with other Council strategies.

7.6 This review also incorporates into the Risk Management Strategy the increased frequency of reviewing the risk register as noted by the Cabinet on 11 June 2019. Increasing the frequency of reviews of the Strategic Risk Register to quarterly will enable risks to be reported alongside performance and budget monitoring and therefore support decision making. There are no further changes to the Risk Management Strategy and the process of risk management in the Council remains the same.

8. Performance Monitoring

8.1 The [Council Plan 2016/21](#) was agreed at Full Council in February 2016. It sets out the Council's three priorities and three ways of working which aim to deliver these priorities. It includes the measures that have been identified as supporting the delivery of the Council's priorities. These key measures of success are refreshed annually. For 2018/19 Council agreed 43 measures of success.

8.2 Monitoring of the Council Plan continues to take place on a quarterly basis, through Cabinet and Scrutiny, evidencing the Council's commitment to be accountable. Monitoring focusses on the key measures of success and the key programmes which have been identified as supporting the delivery of the Council's priorities.

8.3 2018/19 was a successful year for Medway Council in terms of achieving excellent outcomes across all three Council Plan priorities. We have continued to provide high quality services that are appreciated and valued by our residents despite the constrained financial environment we are operating within. We have achieved this by working with our partners, increasing the range of services which customers can access digitally, and by giving value for money when delivering all services. Some of our key achievements in 2018/19 set out against our three priorities are shown in Appendix 1: 2018/19 achievements.

8.4 For 2018/19 we refreshed our reporting, incorporating more graphical content and making the performance updates easier to read. We continue to work on enhancing our reporting; for 2019/20 we're incorporating the Strategic Risk Register updates into the performance reports to give a balanced view of our achievements and risk to our performance, to better support decision making

9. Medway Norse

9.1 Key achievements are as follows:

- The facilities management core contract continues to be delivered to a high standard and there a strong working relationships between colleagues from the Council and Medway Norse.
- Significant training and development provided for staff has enabled Medway Norse to drive through improvements in safety and efficiency in the delivery of Green Spaces work.
- The SEND provision during the academic year 2018/19 operated to an acceptable standard, and Medway Norse were awarded new provider contracts for routes from September 2019. School Admissions and Transport are continuing to work with Medway Norse to resolve any outstanding concern raised by parents.
- The three household waste and recycling centres have continued to operate very smoothly, even during exceptionally high usage following the fire at Pepperhill last spring, maintaining a 60% recycling rate.
- Work to transfer the weekly waste collection and street cleaning contract to Medway Norse includes the implementation of new ICT systems, TUPE transfer of 271 staff, a depot redesign and a new street cleaning fleet. The project is an excellent example of partnership work, across the Council and Medway Norse and it is through the success of the partnership that the transfer has been delivered seamlessly and on and on schedule.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Key achievements against the three Council Plan Priorities (paragraph 8.3 refers)

Background documents – None.