

**BUSINESS SUPPORT**  
**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**26 NOVEMBER 2020**

**ATTENDANCE OF THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR  
RESOURCES**

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### Summary

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

#### 1. Budget and policy framework

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

- Transformation and Digital Services
- Council Plan and Service Improvement
- Business and Administration Support Service
- Complaints Policy and Management
- HR
- ICT
- Legal
- Property
- Category Management/Procurement
- Travellers

## 2. Transformation and Digital Services

### a) Business Change

#### 2.1 Business Change LGC Awards Finalist

2.1.1 The Business Change Team have recently been recognised nationally as finalists in the 2020 LGC Awards within the Business Transformation category.

2.1.2 The successful shortlisting was based on the Business Change Team delivering an ambitious transformation programme, which achieved £7m revenue savings over 3 years from 2016 - 2019.

#### 2.2 ICT Strategic Review – Phase 2

2.2.1 Phase 1 of the strategic review of ICT took place in October 2019 to align the management of ICT with Business Change priorities and workstreams.

2.2.2 The following roles were introduced into the ICT management structure to ensure the management team had the required level of technical expertise:

- ICT Business Support Manager
- ICT Network & Cyber Security Manager
- ICT Strategic Infrastructure Manager
- ICT Systems Manager
- ICT Applications Manager

2.2.3 Phase 2 of the review allowed each manager to re-design their area of responsibility to identify efficiencies and improve ways of working to better support the Council.

2.2.4 The review was completed in March 2020 and realised £420k in revenue savings. The new structure and approach was fully tested during the Covid-19 pandemic where the demands put on the ICT service and infrastructure were huge. ICT were able to continually offer an excellent service to support the implementation of MS TEAMS, mobile devices to allow staff to work remotely, and implement virtual Council meetings to ensure the Council's critical services remained fully operational throughout the pandemic.

#### 2.3 Transfer of Waste Contract

2.3.1 On 6 March 2018 Cabinet approved the Waste Contract transfer to the Medway Norse joint venture company as it offered best value for money, opportunities for efficiencies between existing contracts already part of the JV and flexibility in future service provision.

- 2.3.2 Medway Council and Norse teams worked collaboratively on the contract transfer for almost three years from the initial feasibility study, Cabinet approval and service mobilisation.
- 2.3.3 This project has been an excellent example of partnership working across the Council and Norse. Integrating Council ICT systems and Norse BARTEC systems has been a substantial project taking over 12 months to complete. The close partnership working ensured a seamless transfer to Medway Norse on 1 October 2019.
- 2.3.4 Transferring the waste service to Medway Norse has avoided the costly expense of external procurement (in the region of £500k-£800k), provides increased service flexibility and will lead to strategic cross-service quality and efficiency improvements.
- 2.3.5 This is the new generation of waste service provision with close collaboration, systems integration and full transparency between the Medway and Norse teams.
- 2.3.6 Feedback from residents has been positive and the transfer was seamless for residents, which was the key objective of the project.

## **2.4 Front Line Services Reorganisation**

- 2.4.1 The Business Change Team led a project to re-organise the Front Line Services Division. The team worked with the Assistant Director Front Line Services, and each Service Manager, to produce a structure that provides more effective delivery of services and achieved revenue savings of £406k.
- 2.4.2 The formal period of consultation closed on 10 January 2020 and the engagement from staff was extremely high with many comments, questions and counter proposals put forward. These comments were taken into account and the final structure was successfully implemented from 1 April 2020 to realise the full budget savings for the 2020/21 financial year.

## **2.5 Business Change Governance Structure**

- 2.5.1 The Transformation team structure was changed in February 2020 following the Council's re-organisation that deleted the Assistant Director Transformation post.
- 2.5.2 The Business Change, Digital, CABS, and Business Intelligence Teams now report to the Chief Finance Officer. This has provided the opportunity to fully align the Council's Finance and Transformation strategies.
- 2.5.3 To support these changes to the Transformation Programme, a new governance structure was implemented, which was built upon the principles of the Managing Successful Programmes (MSP) model. The Transformation

Board is the Sponsoring Group, who continue to provide oversight of the Transformation Programme.

## **2.6 Leadership for Change Programme**

2.6.1 The Business Change Team developed a “Leadership for Change Programme” that underwent a successful pilot in early 2020. The full programme then commenced on 6 July 2020 with social care staff from Children and Adults.

2.6.2 The following workshops are included within the programme:

- Leading Through Change
- Creating Resilience Circles
- Understanding Myself
- Me as a Leader in Medway

## **2.7 Street Lighting LED, Column Replacement and Central Management System**

2.7.1 The Street Lighting LED and Column Replacement Scheme was approved at Full Council on 23 April 2020. Highways colleagues contacted the Business Change Team to continue collaboration on the two-year delivery programme and work together to successfully implement the chosen Central Management System (CMS). The CMS is essentially, the entry point for Smart Cities as it allows us to dynamically control the streetlights across Medway.

## **2.8 Electric Vehicle Pilot**

2.8.1 The Business Change Team have developed a pilot to trial 6 electric vehicles for social workers based at Broadside as part of the Council’s climate change and Smart City objectives. A fleet of environmentally friendly, and economical vehicles are available for use by the new international social workers that joined the Council in the autumn of 2020.

2.8.2 The vehicles were handed over to the Council on 20 November 2020 and the performance of the pilot will be evaluated over a 12 month period before a longer-term solution is sought.

## **2.9 Smart Cities**

2.9.1 In the Medway 2035 document, Medway signalled its ambition to be the leading Smart City in the South East. This is also against the backdrop of ever increasing demands on services and infrastructure, reducing budgets, increased expectations, and concerns for our environment.

2.9.2 Advancements in technology and data analysis provide us with the tools to better understand the functioning of our area, and to plan and deliver services more effectively.

- 2.9.3 Over the last year, the Business Change team have sought to advance Medway's Smart City agenda and put 'Medway on the Map'— firstly engaging with all sectors and other Smart City frontrunners throughout the UK. It was clear from these discussions that Medway needed to get the right digital infrastructure foundations in place first and then to build upon this.
- 2.9.4 This has been our main focus, first working with Highways to transform our streetlighting infrastructure, with the deployment of a Central Management System (CMS) and working strategically alongside wholesale Internet Service Providers to facilitate a full fibre network rollout (FFN) within Medway. When implemented, within the next 2 years, this critical infrastructure project will provide the backbone for all future advancements in technology and provide our residents and businesses with gigabit capacity.
- 2.9.5 The team are working on exciting and innovative Smart City projects; which to date have included leading on the delivery of an EV pilot at MHS Broadside for our Adult & Social Care Directorate, working in collaboration with ICT colleagues on a potential Low Power Wide Area Network (LPWAN) deployment, a road surface monitoring solution pilot, in partnership with the Kent Highways/Amey ADEPT Smart Places Live Lab Programme; the deployment of road temperature sensors for winter gritting, and a potential “digital twin” pilot for Medway to create a digital version of Medway to support our planning and regeneration ambitions.
- 2.9.6 A draft Smart City strategy will be presented to Members by the end of 2020, with a view to formal adoption in Spring 2021.

## **2.10 Fostering & Adoption Panels**

- 2.10.1 The use of MS Teams has enabled Fostering and Adoption panels to continue meeting throughout the Covid19 pandemic.
- 2.10.2 The Business Change team has worked with ICT colleagues to develop and test secure document sharing functionality within MS Teams, making the distribution of confidential case documents more secure and reducing copying, collation time and waste.
- 2.10.3 A secure system has been established whereby Panel members are able to read case documents within a secure area without downloading them to a personal device, forwarding, or printing them. This has been tested with the Fostering team and trialled with the Chair.
- 2.10.4 The system was implemented in parallel with the current hard-copy system at the Panel meeting on 23 September 2020. The system will be fully implemented (removing all hard copies) once any issues arising from this have been addressed.

## **2.11 Review of HR Services**

2.11.1 The Business Change team are working with the Head of HR and Head of Finance Operations on a review of the HR, Payroll and Systems teams.

2.11.2 Thirteen workshops were held with over 60 staff between 10 June and 21 July 2020. All staff were encouraged to give open and honest feedback on what the teams currently do well and where there are areas where performance could be improved, or savings achieved.

2.11.3 The Head of Business change held a meeting on MS TEAMS to provide feedback to all staff. This meeting was recorded and then made available to all staff via a TEAMS group. This was particularly appreciated by staff, especially those that were working from home.

2.11.4 A proposal has been developed and the 30-day formal consultation commenced on 21 October 2020.

2.11.5 The specific areas of focus for the review are:

- Address budget pressures
- Enhance collaboration between HR & Payroll
- Improve and “future proof” the ResourceLink system, including data quality and report writing
- Introduce a proactive approach to casework to prevent firefighting and deliver better outcomes for staff and the organisation
- Define remit of organisational change & the Leadership Academy
- Improve the commercial offer of the schools’ support teams for HR & Payroll
- Bring elements of training delivery in-house

2.11.6 The current proposal will achieve a reduction on current salary spend of circa £230k as well as address the areas highlighted above.

## **2.12 Covid-19 Response & Recovery**

2.12.1 The Business Change Team led the “Resourcing Cell” and played a key role in the Council’s response to Covid-19 by managing the redeployment of staff to critical services. In total 224 staff redeployments were made during the pandemic.

- 2 Mayor’s drivers were redeployed as crematorium operators
- 6 library staff were redeployed to the Customer and Business Support Service to assist with answering calls/admin.
- 23 staff from sport, leisure, tourism and heritage underwent training to assist with adult social care. The Business Change Team coordinated with Adults & Workforce development to devise the training programme and completed the appropriate Risk Assessments.

- 3 staff from Business Change and Community Safety have been redeployed to Adult Social Care Partnership Commissioning to coordinate PPE requests from Care Homes.
- 5 staff have been identified that can be redeployed to run the Emergency Coordination Room.
- 11 staff from Internal Audit & Counter Fraud were redeployed (2 to finance, 4.5 to Revs & Bens Medway, 4.5 to Revs & Bens Gravesham).
- 89 staff from Sport, Leisure, Tourism and Heritage supported vulnerable people with shopping for groceries.
- 4 Road Safety staff were trained to process Revs & Bens indexing to assist with the increased demand of Universal Credit claims.
- 1 Finance Officer from SEN was partially redeployed to work on financial reconciliation within the theatres as a result of cancelled/exchanged shows and events
- 4 staff have from libraries assisted with discretionary business grants
- 6 staff helped to register births and work through the backlog of birth registrations
- 70 staff were redeployed as “Medway Greeters” to oversee the safe re-opening of the high streets

2.12.2 The Business Change Team, with support from two members of staff from other services, set up and oversaw processes to ensure that all symptomatic staff at Medway Council, and our providers or partners, were sent for COVID-19 swabbing.

2.12.3 When the Council moved into the recovery phase from COVID-19 each service produced a comprehensive recovery plan, which included a section on “lessons learnt”. The Head of Business Change and Head of Business Intelligence reviewed all recovery plans to identify the key themes to inform an over-arching “Back To Better” plan, which then formed Workstream 2 of the Recovery Coordinating Group.

2.12.4 The key “Back To Better” themes identified by services are:

#### **Remote & Agile Working**

- Support use of MS TEAMS
- End-user device review
- HR Policy review to support agile working
- Property rationalisation

#### **Remote Meetings with Stakeholders**

- Increased stakeholder engagement & partnership working
- Council meetings held & streamed online
- Opportunity to work differently with young people using technology

#### **External Processes**

- Digital channel shift / Digital By Default
- Master data management / Single view of customer
- Automation & self service

- Review “face-to-face” transaction

#### **Internal Processes**

- More effective absence management system
- Integrate systems – HR, Payroll & ICT
- More effective storage & sharing of data
- Review print & post arrangements
- Review contracts, commissioning & expenses

#### **Cashless**

- Public Health benefits of not handling cash
- Promote use of cashless
- Review business intelligence data to identify opportunities for cashless services
- Implement Smart / Technology solutions  
– e.g. e-ticketing for theatres and events

#### **External Communications**

- Improved utilization of social media
- CRM system to better target customers
- Improved database of local business & groups
- YouTube utilized more – messaging & engagement

2.12.5 The Business Change Team are now working with services to prioritise and implement projects across these themes, which are being reported to Transformation Board and Star Chamber.

#### **b) Digital update**

### **2.13 Coronavirus response and recovery**

2.13.1 Since the first lockdown in March 2020, the Digital team has been continuously updating Medway.gov.uk with new information, online services and advice, to ensure the public is kept up to date with all changes to council services due to coronavirus (COVID-19).

2.13.2 New information and advice has included a dedicated [Coronavirus homepage](#), a [council services updates page](#) and a [business support page](#). There are also pages offering [wellbeing advice](#), [information on testing](#) and [support for vulnerable people](#).

2.13.3 In addition, the team has updated more than 500 pages across the site as services have closed, reopened and closed again. This includes parking, Council Tax, housing benefit, crematorium and cemeteries, schools, sports centres, libraries and support for the creative sector.

2.13.4 The Digital team has continued to track customer feedback received through the website, to inform new content required on the website. It has been appreciated by users.



- 2.13.5 Medway.gov.uk has received more than 13.5million page views (16 March to 12 November 2020) compared with 7.7million during the same period in 2019.
- 2.13.6 During the week of 30 March (following lockdown 1), website visitors increased by nearly 70% compared to the same period last year.
- 2.13.7 The main Coronavirus homepage has had more than 230,650 page views and the Service updates page more than 114,000 page views (16 March to 12 November 2020).

## **2.14 Coronavirus and new online services**

- 2.14.1 The Digital team has created new online services to support teams and users to continue to access council services as they close and change due to Covid. This includes:
- Apply for a business grant (and discretionary grant)
  - Book a visit to a tip – by far the most popular new online service
  - Request an emergency food delivery
  - Test and trace form for council buildings
  - Click and collect for services at a hub or library
  - Apply and pay for daily visitor vouchers
  - Apply for a local restrictions support grant and additional support grant
  - Report a concern about a business (relating to Covid)
  - Pay a Covid fine
  - Appeal a council tax summons (not yet live)
- 2.14.2 Other new online services (non Covid) include paying for licences and permits online, applying for planning pre-application advice and requesting approval to recruit (internal).

## **2.15 Online accessibility**

- 2.15.1 In September 2020, new accessibility regulations came into force which mean public sector organisations have a legal duty to make sure their websites and mobile applications meet accessibility requirements.
- 2.15.2 Public sector websites must be accessible and publish an accessibility statement.
- 2.15.3 The Digital team, responsible for Medway.gov.uk, has always strived to publish accessible content, meeting the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1 AA standard. For example, the council strategy and council plan are accessible web pages rather than an inaccessible PDF.

2.15.4 Medway.gov.uk scores 91 and 'excellent' in a national accessibility tool (November 2020), and the Digital team continues to work with our colleagues and system supplier to fix any issues.

2.15.5 The Digital team has produced a toolkit for colleagues who provide content for our websites as well as those who manage other council sites (including libraries, democratic services and schools) to ensure everyone is meeting the council's responsibilities.

## **2.16 New online presence**

### **Healthy workplaces**

2.16.1 The Digital team has worked with Public Health colleagues to deliver an online programme to help businesses to become healthier places to work.

2.16.2 Businesses register their interest online for the Healthy Workplace Programme and then pledge to meet a set of objectives. Through their customer account, they upload evidence against each pledge and can work their way through four stages of accreditation. The process is automated and easy for Public Health colleagues to manage.

2.16.3 The project was shortlisted for a Digital Leaders 100 Award under the category of 'Digital innovation'. The Digital team has since delivered the service for Kent County Council too.

## **2.17 New digital solutions**

### **Chat bots**

2.17.1 The Digital team is working with Public health to create an online chat bot which will allow customers to book a space on a public health class. Instead of completing a form, the bot will ask users questions to help them complete a booking.

2.17.2 This bot makes it even easier and quicker for customers to transact with the council online, offering an improved user experience. It will be the first of its kind on Medway.gov.uk and could lead the way for the Digital team to create more next year.

### **Voice transactions**

2.17.3 The Digital team is working in partnership with four local councils to discover the likely success of developing voice transactions for the council.

2.17.4 The first research phase has been completed and has identified key areas for investigation, including concerns around privacy and the related impact on take up as well as specific examples of how people are using voice technology on a regular basis.

2.17.5 This discovery project will enable Medway to understand whether voice transactions will meet Medway residents' needs and the opportunities for future service delivery.

### 3. Council Plan and Service Improvement

3.1 The Council Plan forms part of the Council's Policy Framework and approval of the Council Plan is therefore a matter for Full Council, following consideration by the Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Following a review of the corporate reporting timetable involving the Council's key strategies and plans, it was concluded that a new overarching Council Strategy should be introduced, and this new Strategy was agreed at Full Council on 10 October 2019.

3.2 The overarching Council Strategy sets out the Council's vision and is more outcomes focused document than the current Council Plan, without all of the detailed performance measures and delivery plans explaining how the strategic objectives are to be met. The overarching Council Strategy is supported by detailed performance measures and delivery plans which continue to be included in the Council Plan. The 2021/22 Council Strategy and Plan will be considered by Cabinet and Full Council in February 2021.

3.3 The review of the corporate reporting timetable sought to increase the consistency with which financial, risk and performance monitoring is reported to Members. In previous years both financial and performance monitoring have been reported on a quarterly basis, while review of the Council's Strategic Risk has taken place every six months. In addition, performance monitoring has been presented to all Overview and Scrutiny Committees in previous years, while risk monitoring has only been presented to Business Support Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

3.4 Presenting performance, finance and risk monitoring together is intended to support informed decision making. In June 2019, the Cabinet agreed that from 2019/20 the Strategic Risk Register will be reviewed on a quarterly basis and presented alongside the Council Plan Performance Monitoring and that each Overview and Scrutiny committee will be presented with performance and risk monitoring pertaining to the committee's areas of responsibility.

### 4. Business and Administration Support Service – BASS

#### **Customer and Business Support (CABS)**

4.1 The Business and Administration Support Service (BASS) no longer exists. BASS was merged with the former Customer Contact team on 2 October 2018; Customer and Business Support (CABS) is the name of the combined service. The service continues to maintain customer and administration support across the council, serving approximately three quarters of council services. CABS incorporates the Customer Relations Team (CRT) which coordinates responses

to complaints, and champions the learning that can be distilled from complaints, across every council service.

- 4.2 Administration is operated as a shared service, where we flex the staff resource to match the peaks and troughs of the council's business needs. This agile approach is facilitated by cross-training and has the benefit of increasing overall resilience across the council. Staff are also able to provide generic business support functions and use the council's CRM (customer relationship management system) 'Lagan' and other back office systems.
- 4.3 CABS also manages the authority's Blue Badge service, receiving around 450 applications per month. The online application process in the Jadu system is popular with customers, as they are automatically kept up to date as their application moves through the various stages of assessment. For those who feel unable use the online facility, two assisted services for applications are available: a supported telephone application, and a face to face equivalent, appointed at Chatham Community Hub. Due to the continuing Coronavirus situation, it has not been possible to offer the face to face application support, but we have increased the number of officers trained to deal with telephone applications.
- 4.4 CABS is responsible for assessing and processing Blue Badge applications promptly and efficiently, but completion time will vary according to the volume and complexity of applications. Existing Blue Badge holders can apply up to 14 weeks before the expiry date of their current badge. This lead-in offers sufficient time for customers to gather and supply documentary evidence. Identity and eligibility checks are undertaken by our CABS officers and applications from customers with complex conditions are subject to further assessment by our Expert Assessors. Eligibility can sometimes be established by our Expert Assessors using "desk-based" assessment methods, while others require a face to face assessment with the customer to correctly establish that eligibility. In line with the Department for Transport (DfT) guidance, face to face assessments were suspended during the first national Coronavirus lockdown. Although this function was resumed at the end of the lockdown, face to face assessments have again been suspended for the duration of the current lockdown restrictions.
- 4.5 Both the council and government websites advise that it can take around 12 weeks decide eligibility. Despite the challenges of Coronavirus, during the first six months of 2020-21 CABS received 2,476 applications and 61% of these were assessed and processed end to end within 30 working days (six calendar weeks) of the application being received.
- 4.6 CABS has continued to support the council's apprenticeship programme; promoting four apprentices to permanent officer posts, recruiting a new cohort of five apprentices in the summer of 2020. CABS has adopted the best practice of working with the Apprenticeship Academy to support apprentices.

## 5. Complaints Policy and Management

- 5.1 The Customer Relations Team (CRT) provides a professional complaints management and reporting service, and supports complaint handlers across the authority, placing an important focus on learning from complaints in order to improve service delivery. CRT acts as the interface with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) and as guardian of complaint response timeliness.
- 5.2 A new online form for customers to make a complaint, via the council's Jadu system, was launched in April 2019. The 2019-20 annual complaint report noted that 51.7% of customers now prefer to use this method when making a complaint, with other options still available for those who prefer an alternative method. The form has been proven to enhance the customers' experience and has streamlined the processing workflow.
- 5.3 The introduction of the new online form and workflow has meant that data can be more accurately drawn upon using Power BI for reporting and analysis purposes. Complaints performance reports are produced and distributed monthly and further analysis reports are issued quarterly and annually. These are shared with complaint handlers, Service Managers and Assistant Directors.
- 5.4 In 2019-20 response timeliness performance for stage one corporate complaints improved further, achieving 92.9% against the 10 day response target of 80%. Year to date performance at the end of October 2020 is a positive 92% and performance has remained well above the 80% target month on month throughout the first half of this year.
- 5.5 Performance for responding to the more complex stage two corporate complaints within 15 working days achieved 81.7% for the year 2019-20 against the council's target of 75%, and the year to date performance was 87.95% at the end of October 2020.
- 5.6 CRT continue to capture and monitor the causes of corporate complaints, and the top three reasons for dissatisfaction remain:
  - Disagree / unhappy with council decisions
  - Service not provided
  - Service was provided, but below the agreed standard
- 5.7 Analysis during 2019-20 has further shown that 'service not provided' and 'service was provided but below the agreed standard' were the categories most upheld, revealing a consistent theme over the last three years.
- 5.8 In addition to generic categories, continued monitoring of more detailed categories, specific to individual services, has allowed analysis and identification of the types of complaints each service receive, and whether these are likely to be upheld. This information in turn informs action plans for service improvement.

- 5.9 CRT identified an increasing trend in the volumes of complaints being escalated to stage two. CRT began to gather data to help to understand the reasons why our customers refer their complaints back to the council for a further investigation. Analysis has shown that the main reasons are:
- Challenging the council's decision
  - Stage one complaint did not fully address the response
  - Actions not carried out at stage one
- 5.10 In order to reverse the trend, CRT made recommendations to investigating officers, including to:
- Provide evidence based responses at stage one to support the council's decision
  - Carry out a thorough root cause analysis to understand and address the origin of the complaint
  - Ensure that all points are considered and responded to, and acknowledge any points that are not within the council's jurisdiction
  - Maintain an action log to ensure that agreed remedies are promptly and fully completed
- 5.11 Trends that are identified from complaints analysis are discussed at each Complaint Handlers Group, which continues to be well attended, and is now managed using MS Teams.
- 5.12 Additionally, Assistant Directors actively discuss the findings of the quarterly reports with their Service Managers to disseminate the messages and embed learning within services.
- 5.13 CRT also collect and report on compliments. During the early stages of Coronavirus, compliment volumes increased, and for several months, outweighed the volumes of complaints received. Since restrictions have been lifted and services began to operate at more normal levels, compliments have decreased, but remain higher than figures recorded during the previous year.
- 5.14 During 2019-20, 221 compliments were recorded and shared with the relevant services so that they could be celebrated. Waste Services and Customer and Business Support were the areas receiving the highest volume of compliments during 2019-20.
- 5.15 In July 2020, the LGSCO released their annual report, and an analysis of their findings was presented to CMT on 16 September. This found that the council had again demonstrated a positive approach to complaint handling, providing evidence that in most cases, complaints are resolved early on, maintaining a low volume of referrals made to the Ombudsman, and a significant reduction of detailed investigations carried out by the Ombudsman.

- 5.16 Of the cases that the Ombudsman investigated, there was also a reduction of complaints which it upheld.
- 5.17 The Ombudsman also highlighted several positive examples where it considered that the council had demonstrated learning and had made improvements following complaint investigations.

## 6. HR

6.1 The HR team are responsible for Employee Relations, Recruitment, Workforce Development, external support to schools, Teacher Partnership, Medway College of Social Care, and the Apprenticeship Academy.

6.2 HR priorities and main programme update:

### 6.3 Inclusion and diversity

6.3.1 We have relaunched the Equality Board, and support to mobilise the staff forums, such as BAME, Gender, and LGBTQ+. We are just in the process of defining key performance indicators. These groups will be crucial to help us promote the values of inclusivity, mainstreaming equality, diversity and inclusion across the Council.

### 6.4 Recruitment and attraction

6.4.1 Working with JobsGoPublic ('JGP') who are our online Applicant Tracking System provider, we reviewed the user journey and have improved it by making changes to the workflow process, producing a recruiting manager's flowchart and improving the email notifications. The contract terms were also re-negotiated, effecting a saving against the previous costs and including £2,000 of free advertising enhancements per month. The Children's Social Care recruitment team have been apportioned a large percentage of the enhancement monies, which is a valuable opportunity for them to promote our social work vacancies to target audiences and has resulted in an increase in applications received.

6.4.2 The team took the lead to coordinate the Council's bid for the Government's Kickstart project initiative and provide 16-24-year olds with six-month job placements. Utilising the current development programme offered via our Apprenticeship Academy and, working with our Adult Education team, we have been able to include an enhanced offer to young people on the programme within our programme bid; i.e. functional skills qualifications in English and Maths, interview skills and cv writing training sessions. The Recruitment team are awaiting the outcome of our submission.

6.4.3 As expected, the team had to make changes to many working processes in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Guiding recruitment managers to implement effective virtual interviews and having to find a way to move from paper-based recruitment files as well as coordinate the DBS service for the

organisation and external umbrella bodies hasn't been without challenge. This year we have moved to an almost wholly online service, supporting the umbrella bodies to understand the benefits of moving to this system and helping them with any technical difficulties. This means that the DBS process is much quicker and paper-free. We hope to have everyone utilising the online platform by the end of year.

- 6.4.4 A significant priority for this year has been the requirement for employers to provide a written statement of employment particulars ('contract of employment') changed in accordance with section 1 of the Employment Rights Act 1996. We have 11 different contracts i.e. Casual, Soulbury, JNC Youth etc. and all of these had to be re-written to ensure we comply with the new regulations and a complete process redesign.

## **6.5 Apprenticeship Academy**

- 6.5.1 The Council's Apprenticeship Academy continues to flourish and in November 2020 was nationally recognised with its inclusion in the inaugural Top 100 Apprenticeship Employers rankings (no. 79).
- 6.5.2 Our statistics continue to impress, and we are one of very few local authorities to have surpassed the challenging Public Sector Target of 2.3% every year, since its introduction in 2017.
- 6.5.3 In 2019-20 we recorded 100 new apprenticeship programme starts, equivalent to 3.18% giving us a 5.73% headcount of staff undertaking apprenticeship programmes (apprentices in apprenticeship posts as well as existing staff being upskilled).
- 6.5.4 Apprenticeship programmes now being undertaken within the authority range from Level 2 to Level 7 (Masters' Degree) and are training people for some of our hardest to recruit to professions i.e. Social Worker, Occupational Therapist and Chartered Surveyor. The age range of our apprentices directly demonstrates the versatility of our apprenticeship provision too, with our youngest apprentice being 16 years old and our oldest being 62 years old. We are keen to support diversity and inclusion and 11% of our apprentices (in apprenticeship posts) declared a disability. We also strongly support the social mobility of young people within Medway and 29% of us apprentices (in apprenticeship posts) reside in the six wards, recognised as Medway's most deprived.
- 6.5.5 Since the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy in 2017 we have commenced in excess of 370 apprenticeship programmes, at a cost of over £2.04m. We are one of the only large local authorities to be fully utilising all our Levy funds for the benefit of the organisation; effecting large savings against training budgets which previously paid for qualifications i.e.



Leadership & Management, AAT, CIPD, CiLEX; and ensuring no clawback of unspent funds by the Government.

6.5.6 Since the UK government announced a full national lockdown on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020, HR Services has worked very hard across all discipline to provide additional support and guidance to the organisation as well as continuing to operate a business as usual service.

## **7. Children's improvement journey.**

7.1 We have worked with the service on redesigning the induction programme to keep our applicants engaged throughout onboarding and have introduced a new career framework, to help with retention. It is too early for feedback, but a full review is due for January 2021.

7.2 We have launched a workforce strategy, which sets out our ambition and key performance indicators around attraction, recruitment, training and retention which includes a brand redesign focusing on culture and our employee value proposition.

7.3 Our main focus this year has been on reducing agency spend. We have achieved a reduction of over 17%. Overall vacancy rate for social workers and team managers in April 2020 was 40.10% (90fte). As of 31 October 2020, the overall vacancy rate for social workers and team managers reduced to 22.98% (56fte). Based on figures to date it is projected that the vacancy rate will be 16% (representing 40 vacancies) by the end of March 2021.

## **8. Employee Relations**

8.1 The Employee Relations Team has been at the forefront in giving professional advice to Medway Council in helping us to adapt and respond to the many challenges that have presented during the ongoing coronavirus crisis. This has meant having to adapt, at a very fast pace, to different and evolving circumstances and to find solutions to enable the Council and its staff to operate effectively.

8.2 A large proportion of work has been defining how policies should be interpreted and implemented to meet the changing needs presented to the organisation. It was necessary to conduct a rapid review of our major policies to make them as flexible and intuitive as they could be to ensure we were able to assist the Council in its discharge of its duties whilst fully supporting our staff. Putting our staff's welfare and safety first has been our main priority, engaging regularly with our senior members, our workforce and trade unions to advise, inform, guide and support.

8.3 Regular communication has been essential, this has been achieved through various forums which include a summary of 'hot topics'. We have produced 26 of these to-date these summaries have typically had up to 6 subjects that were 'burning issues' that week and which needed urgent clarification.

- 8.4 This regular and proactive communication was supported by the recent launch of the HR newsletter and regular signposting of weekly welfare seminars provided by our Employee Assistance Programme provider, Care first.
- 8.5 In order to assist line management with staff welfare concerns, External Relations Team has assumed responsibility for tracking those staff who were either self-isolating, who needed to be tested or were anxious about the risk to their health.

## **9. Training**

- 9.1 Workforce Development (WFD) had planned the first QT delivery, however the impact of COVID meant they had to cancel 155 planned training courses. To ensure development and training was still support they mapped and created new e-learning models, with a strong focus on ensuring mandatory learning could still be accessed.
- 9.2 As a result, we saw an exceptionally large spike in elearning licence requests as well as courses accessed. In the period May-July 2019 there were 236 staff members accessing elearning courses. In May-July 2020, the figures were May - 1256, June - 1294 and July - 1061 staff accessing elearning courses. The trend is slowing down to around 460 per month which is still well above the year on year average. The challenge for WFD has been managing the elearning training with only 600 elearning licences available at any one time.
- 9.3 In the period June 2020-March 2021, 190 courses are planned or have been delivered via Teams, with this number expected to increase. These are both corporate and specialist Children's and Adults training.
- 9.4 Additionally, the WFD trainer created training videos of the high priority and highly accessed training such as PDR for employees and managers, unconscious bias, dementia awareness and customer service.
- 9.5 We have continued to promote our training services externally and this has resulted in a small number of bookings and requests, particularly from Medway Norse.

## **10 Medway College of Social Care**

- 10.1 The Medway College of Social Care is an external training company providing Social Care training to care homes, domiciliary care agencies and personal assistants. Whilst this is an income generating department of WFD and HR, the golden thread running throughout is to ensure that the residents of Medway are receiving the best possible care, therefore we provide the best possible training and at the best possible price.
- 10.2 As the majority of training delivered is F2F and hands on, these courses had to be cancelled with no alternative available. Elearning was offered for some training, such as safeguarding, however the uptake was not good as the

audience are professional carers who have a strong reluctance/little knowledge of elearning and computers.

- 10.3 Additional income is usually generated via bespoke training, private hire of the dedicated Manual Handling training room, grant funding accessed for Medway Council's Direct Payment recipients to train their personal assistants. We were unable to use the Manual Handling training as this is situated with Medway Adult Education Rochester, and this building was closed during lockdown.
- 10.4 A report of estimated income loss for 2020-21 has been provided to the accountants for the DELTA return. This was forecast as amount that would be invoiced as £42428 and total spend for commissioning of training/rooms etc as £23442 – leaving a projected profit after outgoings as £18986.
- 10.5 MCSC has continued to be able to offer Reducing Parental Conflict (RPC) and Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) via Teams training. These were grant funded projects that are multi agency and available to Medway Council staff. PBS generated £30000 in grant funds, with £21000 spent on commissioning. RPC rolled over £9500 from the previous budget year however the income from this was reported in 19/20 budget year.

## **11. Medway Social Work Teaching Partnership (KMTP)**

- 11.1 Partners include Medway Council (lead partner), Kent County Council, University of Kent and Canterbury Christ Church University.
- 11.2 The KMTP decided that their priority for this year was to embed the work of the partnership into the Kent Social Care Academy and the Medway Social Care Academy and some work has been undertaken with Academy faculties.
- 11.3 The priority for the first quarter of the year was on student placements, we ensured extremely good communication with the University of Kent and Canterbury Christ Church University to ensure students could continue their placements and stay safe. All placements in Medway were successfully completed.
- 11.4 In Medway to help with their Improvement Journey, the TP Manager and the WFD Officer designed a package to train the children's social care workforce in Signs of Safety (SofS). They worked with the provider to roll out the training via Microsoft Teams. The first quarter saw 5 cohorts commence the training over 3 half day sessions
- 11.5 Signs of Safety has continued into quarter 2 and 3 with the completion of all 16 cohorts for Assessment and Next Steps, totalling 180 staff. In addition, there has been a total of 18 sessions for Whole Systems Learning and 1 Leadership consultation event.
- 11.6 In addition to SofS the TP provided £150,000 for leadership and management training for children's and adults services, this is awaiting the evaluation of the success of this programme. Plus £12,500 was rolled over to this financial year to provide practice informed training for Adults Social Care, due to the

pandemic this commenced in July.

## **12 HR Schools Team**

- 12.1 The team operate a HR service to schools based on a desired Service level Agreement. Typically, the team would normally generate income in excess of £200k per annum however opportunities for income generation have reduced due to covid19 and with the expansion of multi-academy trusts in Medway. This year the income forecast is circa £165k.
- 12.2 Whilst many tasks undertaken by the schools team are not part of the service level agreement it has been essential HR have supported the monitoring and management of schools retained funding and grants on behalf of Children and Adults Directorate which relate to staff in schools and include the trade union facilities and pension and redundancy budgets.
- 12.3 This has involved establishing the Local Authority/Schools/Trade Union forum, providing full support to the chair, the Assistant Director - Education and SEND. This is a forum that helps co-ordinate the leadership response during covid19 and promote best practice in employer/employee relationships by providing open and constructive dialogue, tackling key and strategic issues and minimising the risk of dispute.
- 12.4 Through this forum the Schools team have produced HR FAQs on Covid 19, aiding schools to interpret the HR implications of continually changing Government guidance to schools. These regular HR FAQ updates are warmly welcomed by all Medway schools and academies and save school leaders time and resources.
- 12.5 The Schools Team also provides a lead role for Medway schools where the Council is the employer in ensuring employment disputes which are at conciliation stage are resolved. This is regardless of whether the school has an SLA for HR services as is vital in mitigating risks to the Council.

## **7. ICT**

### **a) Covid Support**

- 7.1 The Covid loan scheme was setup to enable Medway users to work remotely from home and take full advantage of M365 to continue to run their service / business area remotely. These devices issued have been funded by the Covid Budget.
  - 7.1.1 600+ devices ordered, built & assigned to users for remote working. 40+ councillors had new updated devices issued to them to allow them to remote in from home and take advantage of MS Teams. Ordering / assigning kit optimised using the Service desk portal form so users can log these themselves.

7.1.2 1200 thin client users had the opportunity to work from home in the initial and subsequent lockdowns. The team also responded to many staff changes providing system access to colleagues undertaking new roles during the pandemic.

7.1.3 Modern deployment of applications using modern technology freeing up time and capacity, increasing efficiency and standardising installations including software policies and resolving TeamViewer deployments to allow remote access to devices which has been strategically critical under lockdown.

7.1.4 Deployment of an Office 365 Learning App during lockdown to facilitate user learning.

#### **b) Mobile phone project**

7.2 Medway ICT had up to 5 mobile phone carriers all charging different prices and was issued to a range of departments with different cost codes. The legacy system was inefficient & time consuming and was very difficult to manage. The legacy system also was not the most cost-effective solution, and so the team worked to find an alternative and negotiate a better deal.

7.2.1 Projected savings once everyone has been transitioned to new mobile carrier £240K per year. The setup of new corporate phones will take advantage of technology and allow the devices to be handed to the user and can be setup by the user by just logging in. Users will get an increased 10GB data limit allocated each month.

#### **c) Public Service Network (PSN) Code of Connection Compliance**

7.3 Medway ICT have achieved Public Service Network code of connection compliance thereby receiving certified assurance from CESG that our ICT infrastructure meets all the recommended security controls. This achievement will greatly assist any external accreditations for Information Governance auditing in 2020.

7.3.1 As part of the compliancy works, many operating system environments for Leisure, Parking, Printing, Libraries and GIS have been upgraded.

#### **d) Migration from Frameworki to Mosaic**

7.4 Children and Adult Services used an effective solution (Frameworki) that addressed the service recording, payments, charging, and management information needs of both children and Adult's Social Care.

7.5 However, the supplier, Servelec, no longer developed, or provided fixes for issues, as they had moved onto an enhanced version, Mosaic. This meant Children & Adult Services were at risk of having a system that could not

facility any new statutory changes. It also meant the solution was in a PSN breach as it was an unsupported application.

- 7.6 Mosaic was successfully implemented in July 2020 and is being used by 1100 users across the directorate, including Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub partners.
- 7.7 Mosaic has many benefits to offer, which are in the process of being adopted such as:
  - 7.7.1 Integration with other applications, used by Children and Adult Services, which are also owned by the Mosaic supplier, Servelec. This is important for sharing data across the systems and therefore, reducing the number of applications users need to access.
  - 7.7.2 Group Working – this provides a holistic family view. Time is saved as information is recorded once to automatically update all the family records. This provides crucial social care data for areas such as safeguarding. This is initially being rolled out as part of the ‘Signs of Safety’ Children’s improvement journey, across Children Services, before being introduced to Adult Services.
  - 7.7.3 ‘Smart forms’ is an efficient way of recording data and reduces the time spent by users in completing forms. This too, is currently being rolled out across Children Services as part of the Signs of Safety journey before being applied to Adult Services.
  - 7.7.4 Health viewer – is a tool that will be embedded within Mosaic, that will allow social care users to view data from ‘CareCentric’, (the Kent & Medway Care Record’s health and social care ‘single care record’ system), without having to leave Mosaic and log into a separate system. The work to embed Health viewer, within Mosaic, is in its infancy, but will be ready to use in line with the KMCR go live date January 2021.

**e) Corporate Wi-Fi Refresh**

- 7.8 The corporate Wi-Fi replacement began in August 2020; great strides have been made already with the deployment of the equipment. The estimated completion will be the end of February 2021. This will improve coverage of govroam Wi-Fi across Medway and providing staff with the ability to work from multiple locations.

**f) Omni Channel Contact centre and Telephony refresh**

- 7.9 The current contact centre solution has proven to be a key area to interface with Medway Councils residents, however in its current form it is very limited. The need to bring together all forms of communication from a text message, voice, email and social media into a single pane of glass has become key to the council so that it allows its residents to use whatever platform they prefer to connect with the council.

7.9.1 The solution that has been procured in November 2020 will take advantage of many of the new advancements in technology, one of these being artificial intelligence (A.I.). A.I. brings many tools that we can develop during the lifecycle of the new system. Some examples of this is to use a chatbot to collate a series of questions to allow it to either provide a solution to the resident or enable the contact centre agent to be given all the information they need from the resident so they can handle the query noticeably quicker. This data that is collected before the query is dealt with will also help with getting that query to staff members that hold specialist skills in that area of work. The integration of chatbots will also allow residents to interface with the council 24/7.

## 8. Legal

### a) **Place Team (Property, Contracts, Planning, etc)**

8.1 A summary of some achievements of the team so far this year is set out below:

8.1.1 The team provided advice and assistance to Democratic Services to facilitate the move to remote meetings in response to the COVID-19 restrictions to allow the Council to continue to effectively make decisions whilst unable to hold large scale in person meetings.

8.1.2 The team have continued to provide a robust service despite the impact of the pandemic and property transactions have continued to complete including a lease allowing for a testing centre to be located within Medway.

8.1.3 The contracts team delivered a high level of service continuing to complete a large volume of contracts ensuring that projects such as the development of new HRA housing developments can progress.

8.1.4 The Service continues to act not only for Medway and Gravesham as a Shared service but also to provide advice and assistance to the LATCos established by both authorities.

8.1.5 Whilst many litigation matters have been placed on hold due to the current situation, the Team successfully obtained an out of hours emergency injunction to protect an area of ancient woodland.

### b) **People Team (Childcare, SEN/Education, Adult Services)**

8.2 The average period for child care court proceedings for the last 12 months is 35 weeks. The target is 26 weeks. A few of the recent cases concluding at final hearing have exceeded the 26 weeks due to complexities which has impacted the average.

8.3 CAFCASS recently published national statistics upto and including June 2020 which showed that the national average timescale for care proceedings was

36 weeks and only 1 of the 43 areas (Designated Family Judge areas) averaged 26 weeks or less. The average in 37 of the 43 areas, including Medway, exceeded 30 weeks with the highest average at 46 weeks. The Covid-19 pandemic will have had an impact but these figures demonstrate that the complexities of cases poses a challenge to meet the 26 week target across the country. However, Legal Services continue to work with Children's Services to meet the 26 week target whenever possible and identify the reasons for any delays so that issues within the control of the local authority can be addressed and other issues raised with the Court at the regular meetings with the local judiciary attended by the Assistant Head of Legal Services (People Team). This has reduced from 55 weeks when the 26 week target was introduced 5 years ago so significant improvements have been made.

- 8.4 Legal Services recruited 2 additional advocates on a locum basis in 2019-2020 to reduce reliance on instructing Counsel. This has resulted in a significant reduction in the spend on Counsel fees which sits within Children's Services budget compared with the 2 previous financial years:

- 2017/18 - £457,017
- 2018/19 - £266,002
- 2019/20 - £183,518

## 9. Property

- 9.1 The Council's Capital Projects Team have been heavily involved in the Covid 19 buildings recovery work stream throughout Bronze and Silver Command control, whilst maintaining our service on over 100 properties across our HRA, Housing, Education and Corporate portfolios.
- 9.2 In 2019/2020 the Capital Projects team has closed out the grammar school programme whilst also carrying out various condition works including re-roofing, FRA works, windows and doors and general maintenance of the Education buildings.
- 9.3 We are now underway in the delivery of large SEN projects at design stage at Bradfields, and Abbey Court delivery complete on site summer 2022.
- 9.4 Housing works this year continue from the HRA 2019/20 programme for window replacements, flat roofs, and the FRA fire risk assessment works now a rolling programme. A new housing programme of Capital Works is now commencing.
- 9.5 Works have commenced at the Elaine Centre to turn the remaining area into a new care leavers and adolescent hub.
- 9.6 The Sunlight Centre has been refurbished and reopened with an increased footprint, this was achieved by acquiring additional space. This was a follow on from an Ofsted inspection which required improved facilities.

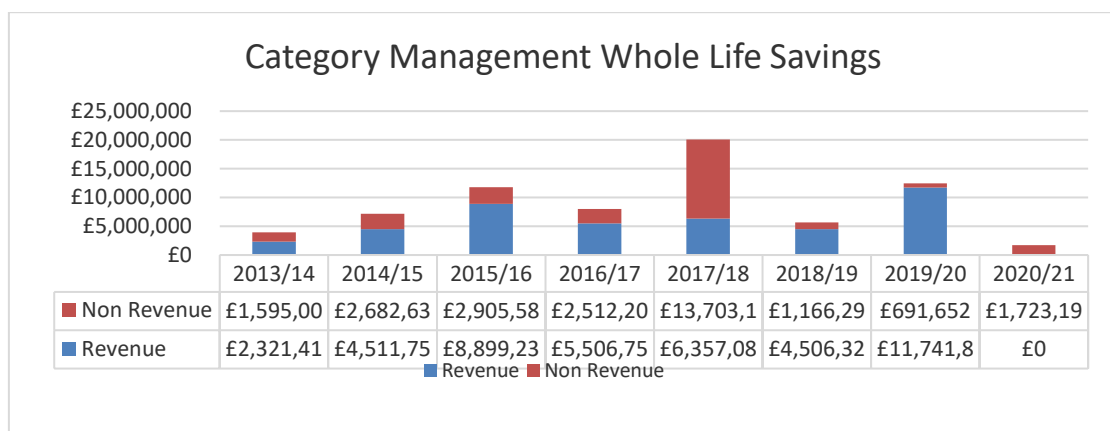


- 9.7 Heritage sites updated this year include the Corn Exchange, which has had the previously identified Health and Safety issues now completed, and the main hall has been refurbished.
- 9.8 The new Corporate Depot site at Maidstone Road, the design is complete following a two stage tender, with a Contractor on board. We are continuing to work to submit to planning.
- 9.9 The Splashes leisure centre refurbishment design is underway. Architectural Consultants have been appointed.
- 9.10 Wigmore Community Hub was completed and opened this year with social distancing during the summer, the local MP attended with Councillors.
- 9.11 Crematorium project was completely signed off during the Covid 19 lockdown in May.
- 9.12 The Brook MSCP, has had staircases repainted, and will have further redecoration of stairwells, lighting and CCTV reviewed, as well as redecoration works carried out.
- 9.13 The net carbon zero objectives for Medway Council are a part of our delivery objectives, and we have been working with the Climate Change Officer to provide data from the net carbon zero modelling.

## 10. Category Management/Procurement

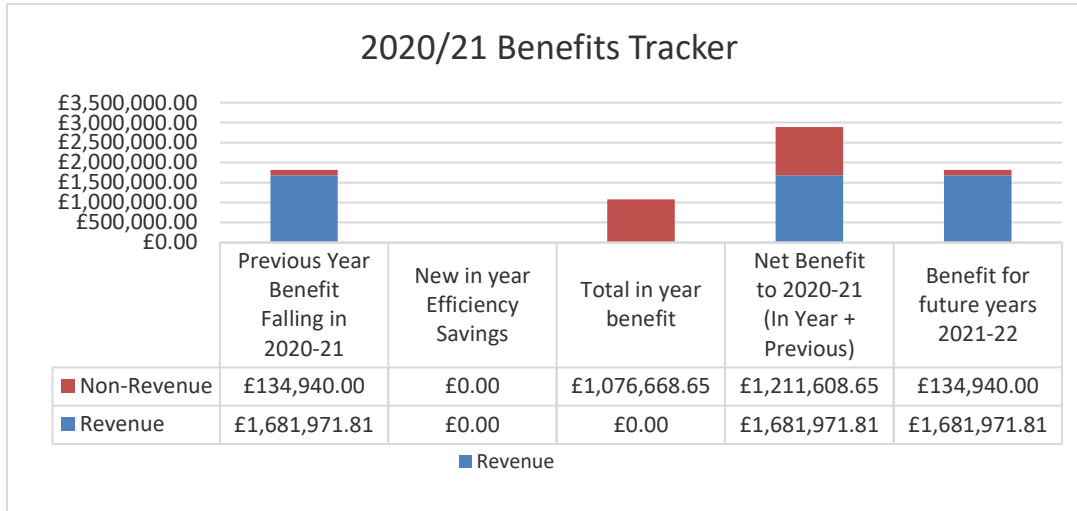
### a) Whole life benefits

- 10.1. The Category Management team, since its creation, has been recording the benefits that it has delivered back to the Council. The chart below details the whole life benefits of the procurement activity that has been undertaken to date. In fact, whole life savings over the 7-year life of the Category Management team now stands at approximately £71m.



## b) In year benefits

10.2 The Category Management team tracks the in-year benefits of its activities so that a record of achievement can be maintained. The information below details where the benefits for this year to date have been achieved.



10.3 The above benefits derive from all the projects delivered by the Category Management team where benefits fall into this financial year's spend.

## c) Working with others

10.4 Since the launch of the Category Management team in December 2013, the skill and professionalism of the team has been recognised and evidenced by the number of external bodies that have been keen for Category Management to not only undertake their procurement exercises but have used our established Frameworks. The range of organisations include:

- Medway Clinical Commissioning Group
- Dartford, Gravesham and Swanley Clinical Commissioning Group
- Swale Clinical Commissioning Group
- Gravesham Borough Council
- Maidstone Borough Council
- Kent County Council
- Medway Development Company
- Medway Norse
- Medway Commercial Group
- The Kent Buying Consortium

## d) Creation of new frameworks

10.5 Category Management continuously review public framework compositions to ensure officers have the most appropriate means to accessing the market on any given project. Whilst the team has established a range of internal

framework to speed up the tendering process, they also utilise the work other public bodies have conducted.

- 10.6 By using a two-pronged approach, officers are able to freely access a wider range of frameworks to meet their needs.

#### **e) Supporting the local economy**

- 10.7 The Team is keen to develop local supply chains and as such holds relevant market engagement events. These events have increased in popularity and the Team believe that some of the increased outcomes achieved from procurement activity stems from them – namely value for money, communication, approachability with the market and increased competition.
- 10.8 Furthermore, as the team procures during the approach to UK's exit from the European Union and during the pandemic, the adoption of Social Value to drive quality plus deliver organisational aspirations increases.

#### **f) Reducing red tape**

- 10.9 The team has adopted and continues to fully utilise standardised documentation to increase the likelihood of SME participation in tender activities.
- 10.10 Standardisation also serves to reduce the financial pressure as well as complexity of tendering during uncertain times and through this consideration of suppliers, the team has seen a blanket rise in the quality of tender submissions received.

#### **g) Sustainable Procurement**

- 10.11 We have embedded internal self-service when using frameworks via the Kent Business Portal to speed up awards. The relevant teams are given training and their subsequent awards/projects are sporadically spot checked to ensure compliance to what a normal procurement activity should look like.
- 10.12 The team facilitates a flexible approach to contract management to ensure all services can proactively manage their contractual deliverables with a process for escalating matters for resolution.

#### **h) UK's exit from the European Union**

- 10.13 Whilst it's not envisaged to directly impact the team's ability to procure, as the legislation governing public sector procurement has been abridged for post transition, nor impede the quality of tenders received, it is important to note the potential financial impact come 1 January 2021.
- 10.14 Although Medway only manages tier 1 suppliers (those we are directly contracting with), an assumption has been made that materials, specifically those for works-based contracts are occasionally imported. Whilst the current

cost of materials may not alter due to stockpiling in the industry, the cost of these raw materials is expected to raise with time.

- 10.15 In 2018, for example, Steel and Central Heating Boilers formed 2 of the UK's top 5 imported materials. In proportion to the value of the projects they are used, a hypothetical increase of 10% of these materials could result in further action such as Value Engineering being more heavily relied on to make the projects affordable at the expenses of more resource hours.

#### **i) Covid-19**

- 10.16 Covid-19 has illustrated the resilience of Medway's procurement team when reviewed in line with the above deliverables. By having already streamlined and facilitated quicker, compliant means to the market, the team has been able to assist with organisational deliverables in respect of Covid without it impeding performance in other areas of service delivery.
- 10.17 An area the team is particularly proud of is the proactive management of supplier relief as well as the facilitation of PPE to the organisation.

#### **Valuation and Asset Management**

- 10.18 The Council made a net income (before borrowing costs) of £3,399,179 from the Pentagon Centre in 2019/20 against the budgeted income of £2,475,000, an underspend of £924,179, which represented a return of 9.7% on the purchase price of £34,875,000 (excluding costs.) Owning the centre will also release development and regeneration opportunities for the Council including the conversion of Mountbatten House into apartments.
- 10.19 The Pentagon shopping Centre is managed for the council by Ellandi.
- The shopping centre is currently almost fully let, with a vacancy rate of only 4.4% at ground floor (compared to an Ellandi benchmark of 6%). Over the past 12 months, we have completed 18 new lettings, renewals and regears of units within the centre. The period from March 2020 onwards has clearly been a challenging time for retail and The Pentagon shopping centre has not been immune from the difficulties this sector faces. This has ranged from operational issues to shops being forced to close and the inevitable reductions in their turnover. The management team on the ground have risen to this challenge admirably and has worked hard to keep up with changing demands. The Pentagon has outperformed the national benchmarks in terms of footfall reductions over this period, bolstered by the number of essential retailers in the centre and local, loyal catchment. Current rental income is set out in an Exempt Appendix.
- 10.20 Using One Public Estate and other external funding, the former supermarket in Britton Farm Gillingham, has been converted into accommodation for Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust (KMPT) and these premises are now let to KMPT at a rent of over £240,000pa.

- 10.21 The agreement for lease has been completed with the Education Funding Agency (EFA) for the grant of a lease for a proposed special school site at Cornwallis Avenue.
- 10.22 Last financial year, the Council obtained £3,112,844 in capital receipts from 14 transactions including £2,957,244 from Rochester Riverside. The Council is likely to receive over £5.4M in 2020/21, mainly from Chatham Waterfront (£2,090,000), Whiffens Avenue (£512,000) and White Road (£2,790,000.)
- 10.23 At Rochester Riverside, Countryside has been appointed as the developer and we have completed the development agreement. Planning consent has been granted (outline for the whole site and detailed for the first 3 phases). Works have started and phases 1 and 2 have transferred with land payments being made 12 months later. The phase 1 and 2 land payments have been agreed at £519,000 and £2,428,114 and have now been paid. The sale of a small additional area of land to Countryside for £60,100 has also completed. Phase 3 is likely to be drawn down within the next 3 months with payment being 12 months later.
- 10.24 The Team will continue to work with regeneration and Countryside to ensure that the requisite licences and agreements are in place with service providers so as not to hold up the development.
- 10.25 Countryside is required by the S106 agreement for Rochester Riverside to build a 1 Form Entry Primary School with core facilities for a 2 Form Entry school and the Department for Education has agreed to fund the cost of the additional classrooms to make the school a full 2 Form Entry School. Works will start in 2021 and the school will be completed in time for September 2022.
- 10.26 The masterplan (Supplementary Planning Document) for Strood Riverside and the former Civic Centre site have been approved and the construction of the flood defences is now completed. Carter Jonas and Womble Bond Dickinson have been appointed to advise on the disposal/development of the Civic Centre site and the Civic centre site has been marketed on the council and its advisors are currently considering bids for the site.
- 10.27 The land needed to develop the Chatham Waterfront site has been acquired and planning permission for this has been secured. This site will transfer to Medway Development Company later this year so that it can be developed for 175 apartments and commercial space.
- 10.28 Terms have been agreed for MDC to acquire the Whiffens Avenue and Chatham Waterfront sites and development of 20 affordable houses is underway at White Road. These will be completed and transferred to MHS for £2,090,000, by 31 March 2020
- 10.29 In addition to the net income (before borrowing costs) of £3,399,179 from the Pentagon, the Council's rented investment properties are achieving a return of circa 6.7% per annum and the non-operational properties 8% . Long-term

voids (at over 6 months) are running at 1.1% In 2019/20, the Council generated rental income of circa £1.785 m and the Valuation and Asset Management team generated fee and miscellaneous income (ignoring SLA income) of circa £285,500.

10.30 Amongst other things, in the last year (1/11/19 to 31/10/20) the following transactions have been completed:

Leases Granted = 29  
 Leases Taken = 5  
 Rent Reviews = 23  
 Disposals = 6 totalling £18,005 (see below)

10.31 The housing stock was revalued as at 31 March 2020 (185 Beacon valuations) and all general fund asset valuations for the 28 February 2020 re-valuation date have been completed. (over 300 valuations). The Team has categorised leases for finance, carried out an impairment review and assisted finance with any audit queries.

10.32. In 2019/20, the income generated from the council's Seedbed units at Pier Road and Hopewell Drive was as set out below:

|           | Gross income | Costs   | Staff costs | Net income |
|-----------|--------------|---------|-------------|------------|
| Hopewell  | £92,918      | £10,527 | £8,060      | £74,331    |
| Pier Road | £135,874     | £13,138 | £4,140      | £118,596   |

Current occupancy is as set out below:

|           | No of units | No of units let | % of units let | Lettable space sqft | Amount of space let sqft | % of space let |
|-----------|-------------|-----------------|----------------|---------------------|--------------------------|----------------|
| Hopewell  | 23          | 19              | 83%            | 11,318              | 9,449                    | 83%            |
| Pier Road | 29          | 27              | 93%            | 10,920              | 10,210                   | 93%            |

One of the vacant units at Pier Road is under offer and will soon be occupied.

Three of the vacant units at Hopewell are under offer and are soon to be occupied.

10.33 No complaints have been received and the average case load is now 158 cases per FTE.

## 11. Travellers

11.1 National Planning Policy and legislation dictate that Local Planning Authorities should understand the need and plan for Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling

Showpeople's accommodation within their areas. The Planning Policy Team is doing this through the development of the new Local Plan.

- 11.2 So far the Planning Policy Team has completed a Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA). The GTAA assesses the need for Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling show people pitches/plots in the Local Plan period. The results of this assessment outlined a need for 36 pitches for Gypsy and Travellers and 3 plots for Travelling Show people.
- 11.3 To calculate if Medway can accommodate the outlined need in the GTAA the Council has also been undertaking site assessments on potential sites. This work has involved a review of existing sites and search for new sites. The conclusion of this work is to develop allocations for the new Local Plan in order to set the areas for growth. Supporting this work is the development of a new planning policy relating to Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Show people to be adopted in the new Local Plan that will be used to manage any proposed development for Gypsy, Traveller and Traveller Show people use over the plan period.
- 11.4 All results of this work are to be adopted into the new Medway Local Plan when it is adopted.

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#### Appendices

Exempt Appendix – Pentagon Income details

#### Background documents

None