

BUSINESS SUPPORT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

7 JULY 2022

ATTENDANCE OF THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR RESOURCES

Report from: Councillor Adrian Gulvin, Portfolio Holder for Resources

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
- Customer and Business Support
- Complaints Policy and Management
- HR
- ICT
- Legal
- Category Management/Procurement
- Travellers

2. Transformation

a) Business Change

2.1 Adult Social Care Transformation & Improvement Programme

2.1.1 The Adult Social Care Transformation & Improvement Programme focuses on three key areas: prevention, safeguarding and resilience. The programme aims to: reduce Adult Social Care demand; introduce more straight-forward,

efficient, and effective processes; and improve the Adult Social Care experience for our customers.

- 2.1.2 It is anticipated that this programme will realise savings of over £3m across the following projects:
- 2.1.3 Assistive Technology – reduction of double handed Care and the introduction of MiiCare, Canary Care and other Smart monitoring technologies identified by Kyndi.
- 2.1.4 Client Finance – introduction of the CareCubed system to support social care teams with an evidence-based approach to give a clear baseline for care costs. It is used to bring clarity to the cost of care by both care commissioners (local authority and Clinical Commissioning Groups) as well as care providers.
- 2.1.5 Front Door - review the structure and processes at the Front Door, focused reablement to improve the triage of clients, and the introduction of the digital self-assessment tool.
- 2.1.6 Learning Disability Provision – expansion of the Flight services, which have been shown to deliver positive outcomes for the tenants who follow its programme of developing independence skills, as well as delivering value for money compared to external providers. The potential to offer LD clients a tenancy in a new-build home will demonstrate the ambition of the council to deliver high quality housing options for all its residents.
- 2.1.7 Targeted Reviews – a joint team with staff from finance, commissioning and brokerage services have identified a cohort for targeted reviews in 2022/23. The team have recently secured Continuing Healthcare (CHC) funding for a service user where the primary need is a learning disability, which the team have not been successful with in the past. There will now be further cases reviewed to see if this funding stream would be appropriate.
- 2.1.8 Business Change All Member Briefing
The Business Change Team ran an all-Member briefing session on 2 November 2021 to demonstrate how the team review work processes and organisational structures to improve services and achieve revenue savings.
- 2.1.9 The session was well attended by Councillors, and gave an update on existing Business Change projects, provided an insight into the tools & techniques the team use to achieve Organisational Change, and outlined some of the Smart City solutions that have been implemented by the team.
- 2.1.10 The briefing covered the following areas to give a wide-ranging sample of the projects the team have been working on:
- Business Change Project Roadmap
 - Adult Social Care Transformation & Improvement Programme
 - Children's Social Care: Assessment Unit
 - Organisational Change

- Revenues & Benefits / CABS Demand
- Smart Cities

2.1.11 The event was well received, and the team have received really positive feedback from the Members that attended.

2.2 Preparing for Adulthood

2.2.1 This project forms part of the Adult Social Care Transformation and Improvement Programme. Business Change are supporting this project to improve the transition process from Children's Social Care to Adult Social Care to ensure that all service users are assessed in good time to determine eligibility and to guarantee a successful transition.

2.2.2 The Business Change Team, in consultation with colleagues, have developed a single clear process so that all potential service users are treated equitably, regardless of which pathway they have come through. An integral part of this is the need for a new format to the Transitions Panel, which previously heard cases, but was perceived by social workers as time-consuming and unclear in purpose. This panel has now been replaced with the 17+ Transitions Pathway Planning meeting, and Terms of Reference have been agreed.

2.2.3 The meeting aims to discuss what happens next for every young person aged 17-18 who is open to Children's Services. Relevant Team Managers present cases verbally to minimise paperwork. Three pilot meetings have been completed and it is clear that the process is more efficient than the previous Transitions panels, which tended to review approximately 10 cases over a three-hour meeting period. The three pilot meetings have looked at 12, 20 and 34 cases respectively and each meeting has lasted approximately one hour.

2.2.4 The 17+ meetings will now be held on a monthly basis, at least until early Summer 2022, to address backlogs, but by that stage, it is anticipated that the service will be working to a schedule whereby all cases will be heard no later than six months ahead of the young person's eighteenth birthday, which is considered by the services to be the optimal time to discuss the future pathway.

2.3 Medway Children's Residential Assessment Unit Provision (Eden House)

2.3.1 The refurbishment of the Old Vicarage was completed in November 2021 and the property has been handed over to the provider, Five Rivers. The service (and the building) has now been named "Eden House". An open afternoon was held on 10 November 2021 for key stakeholders to visit the site and learn more about the service. Five Rivers provided outreach activities until Ofsted registration was achieved in January 2022, where the service commenced residential care.

2.3.2 Business Change assisted Children's Partnership Commissioning with the project management of this initiative; including the production of the business case, Council reports, reconfiguration of the building, redecoration, and organising the opening event.

2.3.3 As the service moves into 'business as usual' operations, Business Change will step back from the day-to-day management of the project. However, the team will continue to support the project to ensure that commitments are met, which will include attending the monthly performance meetings. Business Change will also continue to support the five-year project by tracking savings, KPIs and supporting the second phase when an additional site is added.

2.4 Print Reduction

2.4.1 There has been a general reduction in printing due to the digital transformation of the organisation, such as the roll out of digital devices to staff and Councillors and online meetings. In 2016 almost 10million black and white pages were printed. Since the Transformation Programme has introduced mobile devices, agile working, digital channel shift and Microsoft TEAMS, the Council has seen a steady decline in printing since 2016 with around 4million black and white prints being made in 2019.

2.4.2 This is a reduction of 6million prints per year. If this many A4 sheets were laid out end-to-end they would reach from Gun Wharf, through France and Spain, to Gibraltar (1,782km). The early part of 2020 (up to 30 June 2020) indicates a further reduction in printing, which can be attributed to the increases in agile working and reduced numbers at Gun Wharf.

2.4.3 Due to the reduction of printing, we have been able to review the number of Multi-Functional Devices (MFDs) at Gun Wharf, reducing from 38 to 14 machines. This has achieved savings of £44,500. The drastic reduction in printing will also achieve additional savings of £99,217 in 2022/23, as well as supporting the Council's Climate Change objectives by using less paper, ink, and energy.

2.5 Digital Transformation of Children's Quality Assurance (QA) & Safeguarding

2.5.1 Business Change have worked with the QA & Safeguarding teams in Children's Social Care with a review of the service following the implementation of the Signs of Safety practice model. The service was restructured to provide greater flexibility and resilience. Workshops were held with the teams and a redesign of processes, and the creation of "Virtual Conferences", have achieved revenue savings of £68,000.

2.5.2 Following the lifting of Covid-19 restrictions, the Business Change team has developed a hybrid model for conferences at Eagle Court, with Child Protection (CP) Chair, social worker, and the family in the meeting room; and external partners continuing to join virtually. There are now two conference

rooms equipped for hybrid conferencing; both with two large height-adjustable monitors, cordless keyboard and mouse and moveable lectern.

- 2.5.3 The CP Chairs also have headsets which are used for dictating meeting comments and recommendations directly into the meeting documents during the conference itself, so that participants immediately see the outcomes (utilising speech-to-text technology).

2.6 Gun Wharf footprint reduction

- 2.6.1 Business Change led the project to relocate around 250 staff from Level 2 of Gun Wharf into Level 3 to free up space for the Ministry of Justice to lease sections of Level 2 (to generate income for the Council) and contribute to the Gun Wharf overhead costs.
- 2.6.2 A carefully planned programme was developed to relocate teams, which was achieved without any adverse disruption to services.
- 2.6.3 Savings of £182,135 have been achieved for 22/23. This will raise to over £300k in future years when the Ministry of Justice start to occupy the building after the alterations have been completed, which are currently underway.

2.7 Self-scanning

- 2.7.1 The Business Change Team have been working on a project to provide a facility for members of the public to self-scan documents to submit to the Council, which enables the Council to streamline the process for acquiring evidence from members of the public – e.g. within Housing and Revenues & Benefits
- 2.7.2 The final beta-testing phase has commenced, where services are testing the customer experience. As we are testing, we are reporting errors and requesting improvements back to the supplier for them to create our final build. It is anticipated that the physical fixtures for the tablets will be delivered within the next month and set up in the initial sites for the pilot, which have been identified as Twydall Community Hub and Gillingham Library, by the end of June 2022.

2.8 Moving Traffic Offences

- 2.8.1 The Business Change team are working with Transport colleagues to review the opportunity to use new legislation to enforce moving traffic offences (MTO), such as yellow box junctions, to improve the traffic flow within Medway.
- 2.8.2 The Council will carry out a period of public consultation on a selection of potential sites across Medway and carry out traffic surveys to determine the impact of introducing the enforcement of moving traffic offences.

2.9 Planning: Digitisation of Planning Microfiche Files

- 2.9.1 Business Change are supporting the planning service with digitising traditionally “hard copy” materials, in particular the 7 million microfiche images stored at Gun Wharf. Having so much historical data stored as “hard copy only” microfiche is a barrier for the service to take advantage of digital and online options, such as hybrid working, and also presents a risk to the security and availability of this information.
- 2.9.2 The scanning is being conducted by a specialist supplier and it is anticipated that all files will be scanned by this summer. The Planning teams can already make immediate use of the scanned files and access the required information to deliver the planning service.
- 2.9.3 The 2nd phase of this project (creation of an online self-service facility for search on historical documents) has also now commenced. The digital data is already proving vital for another large Planning project looking at planning applications and back-office systems, which has just commenced (see RIPA/BOPS further in this document). Information in some of the digitised documents will advise the automation applied to the initial stage of any submitted planning application.

2.10 Planning: RIPA/BOPS

- 2.10.1 The Planning Service recently applied for, and received, a grant to implement a product developed by Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and initially piloted by 5 Councils across the UK. This product aims to reduce the number of received invalid planning applications (RIPA) and improve the way they are received, worked with and stored in back-office planning system (BOPS).
- 2.10.2 Members of the Business Change Team have been assigned part-time to this implementation project to help with project management and business analysis aspects. Staffing costs will be reimbursed from the funding.

2.11 Icon Income Management & Chip & Pin Payments

- 2.11.1 The Chief Finance Officer and finance systems team requested some project management support from the Business Change team surrounding an urgent and “outcome critical” piece of work at the beginning of March 2022. The risk was that, due to a required software upgrade, from the start of May 2022 the Council would no longer have the facility to take card payments at community hubs as well as other locations including the crematorium and the registrar’s office.
- 2.11.2 The project was successfully completed with minimal disruption of services delivery to our customers. This project also highlighted how “ahead of the curve” Medway’s ICT service is. Some of the issues experienced with the supplier related to an incompatibility of their software with Microsoft Edge. Microsoft Edge is the internet browser that will be replacing Internet Explorer, which will be retired by Microsoft on 15 June 2022.

2.11.3 Medway ICT have been preparing for this “switch off” for some time, to ensure all Council systems will continue to work. However, the supplier had not given this early consideration, so a flaw in their software code was identified by Medway ICT. This would have affected all of their customers, including Medway, after 15 June 2022 but due to discovering it now, we have prevented a further disruption to services.

2.12 Behavioural Science / Nudge Theory

2.12.1 Business Change have staff with experience and expertise in Behavioural Science / Nudge theory. The team have been running Behavioural Change/Nudge Theory training corporately, which has been made available to all staff through i-share, the Council's online training booking tool. The course is delivered in 2 parts, both virtually and face to face, and covers the history of Nudge Theory, identifying barriers to change and applying tried and tested principles to a behaviour change idea that delegates have developed.

2.12.2 As of the end of June, fifty-six colleagues have successfully completed this training and have access to continued Nudge community support through a dedicated TEAMS channel.

2.13 Smart Cities

2.13.1 Digital Connectivity

Digital connectivity is the very foundation of any aspiring smart city. Achieving gigabit speeds (1000mps or faster) will make a huge difference to the lives of our residents and businesses here in Medway. The CityFibre full fibre to the premises (FTTP) network deployment is continuing at pace, with Phase 1, which includes over 90,000 premises in Medway, expected to be complete in 2024. The FTTP build has been split into two, with work commencing in Gillingham and Rainham first at the start of last year; and Rochester and Chatham to follow in 2022.

2.13.2 The likes of Openreach, Virgin Media and Trooli are also improving digital connectivity in the area. The Council is also working with the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and Building Digital UK (or BDUK) to target intervention where parts of Medway have experienced ‘market failure’, particularly in the more rural parts of Medway. It is anticipated that ‘Project Gigabit’ will enable improvements in internet speeds for all residents in Medway.

2.14 Smart Parking

2.14.1 The Business Change Team have led on cashless parking and Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) parking management solutions to enforce 100% compliance and reallocate Civil Enforcement Officer resources.

2.14.2 The new ANPR parking management system at Rochester Multi Storey Car Park has been well received, both from Parking colleagues and from the public. From an operational perspective, compliance remains above 98%. A QR code option for patrons to download parking receipts has also gone live; reducing the amount of paper and is more environmentally friendly.

2.14.3 Payment methods have been closely monitored to identify trends. From the date the system went live (22 November 2021) up to the end of May 2022 the % split of payment method has been:

Chip & Pin	61.2%
Contactless	23.1%
Mobile app	10.9%
Autopay Account	3.1%
Cash	1.7%

2.14.4 ANPR (Expansion) – Corporation Street, Blue Boar Lane and Cathedral Garage.

Building on the success of Rochester MSCP, the Council will be installing ANPR in Corporation Street, Blue Boar Lane and Cathedral car parks. The new payment machines in all three car parks will accept cash, but Rochester MSCP will now transition to “cashless” to reflect the trend of usage identified for this primarily commuter car park.

2.14.5 The project is expected to be finished by the end of September 2022. Every effort will be made to limit disruption in this time, particularly given the number of events happening in Rochester over the summer months.

2.15 Smart Road Surface Monitoring

2.15.1 Currently, our highway engineers walk roads of Medway to inspect road defects or “potholes”. The Business Change and Highways Teams partnered with a technology partner, RouteReports, for an 8 month pilot to remotely monitor road surface condition; combining the use of video, telematics and machine learning (artificial intelligence). When compared with our current regime, RouteReports picked up on an impressive 80% of the same defects picked up by our engineers.

2.15.2 The Council acquired six devices, appended to three highway inspection vehicles and three refuse vehicles. These vehicles constantly move around the Medway roads, thus allowing for the Medway dashboard to be updated on a regular basis, which in turn allows the use of predictive analytics to assist inspectors with forward planning of maintenance schedules. Options to expand the scheme are now being considered.

2.16 Smart IoT Winter Gritting Pilot

2.16.1 As part of the Highways Act, Medway Council are under a duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that safe passage along a highway is not

endangered by snow or ice. Maintaining a safe passage under winter storms is critical to the safe and expedient flow of road traffic in Medway. Forecasting and predicting when to treat the network is crucial in ensuring the network remains safe to use and therefore the use of weather stations and sensors are of the utmost importance.

2.16.2 In October 2021, in readiness for the 21/22 winter season, the Council installed road temperature sensors as part of a pilot to provide more accurate data when deciding whether to grit the road network in Medway. In total, 10 sensors were installed, providing accurate data across two of the eight gritting routes (across Gillingham and Walderslade).

2.16.3 The project was delivered on time and on budget and the data collected from the pilot was cross referenced against the existing weather stations, which are used to determine if precautionary treatments are required. Out of 32 days that precautionary treatments were undertaken, if the Council were to switch to a route-based forecast system and use the road temperature sensors going forward, the Council would have only needed to treat 4 out of the 32 days in the Gillingham area and 22 out of the 32 days in the Walderslade / Lordswood area.

2.16.4 The results from the pilot are hugely encouraging and plans are being developed to extend the use of road temperature sensors to all twenty two wards in Medway before the next winter season.

2.17 Medway Digital Twin

2.17.1 The Planning Service are coming under increasing developmental pressures, particularly in Chatham Town Centre, with developers looking to “go high”. The Council have piloted the use of a 3D visualisation model (or ‘Digital Twin’) from VU.CITY. Essentially, the platform uses gaming software to recreate parts Medway in the digital space, to within 15 centimetre accuracy. Around 5 square kilometres has been modelled; including Chatham Town Centre, Chatham Intra, Rochester High Street/Riverside and Strood Waterfront.

2.17.2 The intention is to use this platform to review major housing and commercial schemes, within the existing townscape, in pre-application meetings with developers and as part of the decision making process; and for Members to debate larger schemes at regular briefings and Planning Committee. The pilot will last 12 months to April 2023; with the hope that the 3D model will be expanded in the future.

2.18 Electric Vehicles

2.18.1 The Business Change Team has supported the Transport and Parking Service with all of the electric vehicle (EV) workstreams in Medway. This includes the production of the first Electric Vehicle Strategy and Implementation Plan (2022 – 27), delivery of the first tranche of public EV

charging points in Medway (installed by Connected Kerb) and Medway's first ever EV event at the Rochester Castle Gardens in September 2021.

2.18.2 The Council continues to work with Connected Kerb (partnering with Osprey, a rapid electric charging point supplier) who won the tender for the Kent & Medway Charging Point Network (formerly known as the Kent 600). Medway are one of six other neighbouring Local Authority partners in the project; overseen by Kent County Council.

2.18.3 The intention is for around 20 car park sites across Chatham, Gillingham, Rochester, Strood and Rainham to offer public EV charging provision. Not all sites can be catered for due to planning constraints, power supply issues or simply due to their size/parking capacity. On street provision is also being considered, but resources are currently focused on the delivery of the Kent & Medway Charging Point Network project.

2.19 CCTV & Video Surveillance

2.19.1 In January 2022, the Smart City Delivery Manager was appointed as the Acting CCTV Single Point Of Contact (SPoC) for Medway Council. This follows a re-organisation of the Frontline Services management team, which appointed a new Head of Regulatory Services and moved the CCTV function to the Business Change Team to better align with the Council's Smart City ambitions. This has also provided the opportunity to consolidate the relationship with Kyndi and link with other Business Change workstreams, such as the assistive technology project.

2.19.2 The SPoC's role is there to support the management of video surveillance systems across the local authority area of responsibility. A complex framework of legislation and regulation exists for such technology and the CCTV technology is becoming increasingly sophisticated. The Council is working closely with Kyndi, and other partners with CCTV assets, to ensure that the vast array of equipment; its siting, deployment, use, and management; continues to be effective and lawful.

2.19.3 In light of the above, a comprehensive review of all CCTV infrastructure is now underway, covering surveillance camera systems which includes CCTV, body worn video (BWV), automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) and "dash cams".

2.19.4 One of the actions from the review will be to establish geospatial coordinates for all operational cameras under the purview of Kyndi, Medway Norse, and any other Council partners so that they can be plotted on the Council's GIS Mapping software. This will provide the Council, Kyndi and the CCTV partnership with a holistic overview of camera locations to inform future decisions and reviews.

2.19.5 Following a recent maintenance review, the vast majority of the Council's CCTV infrastructure operated by Kyndi is in good working order. The SPoC, and colleagues from the Community Safety Team, are working with Kyndi to agree a phased scope of works to form a programme of maintenance that addresses priority needs as some cameras are approaching the end of their working lifespan. Work is already underway to improve our CCTV infrastructure. The first phase has now been completed, involving the replacement of 5 x PTZ (pan, tilt, zoom) cameras in Twydall and relocating existing HD camera stock to Strood Town Centre.

2.19.6 The Smart City Delivery Manager will now attend Police Liaison and Community Safety Partnership Strategic Executive Group, and act as the interface for CCTV with the Medway Task Force and Kent Police. Other immediate actions include reviving the Council CCTV Partnership Board Meeting with Gravesham Borough Council; analysing options to expand the partnership and reviewing the Council's CCTV governance, including the Code of Practice, with the Information Governance Team.

2.20 Organisational Change

2.20.1 FBI Senior Management Team Re-Organisation

2.20.2 Following the creation of a Chief Operating Officer (COO) post, reflecting the broader range of responsibilities for the previous Chief Finance Officer, 3 Strategic Service Manager posts have been created to coordinate the services within the FBI Division to deliver the Council's objectives.

2.20.3 The following posts were introduced into the Finance and Business Improvement senior management team:

- **Chief Finance Officer (CFO)** - This role brings together finance strategy, finance operations and revenues and benefits under a single strategic head of service.
- **Chief Organisational Culture Officer (COCO)** - taking on responsibility for HR, payroll, the Council Plan, performance monitoring and strategic risk management.
- **Chief Information Officer (CIO)** - pulling together Business Change, Business Intelligence, Smart Cities, ICT, and CABS to progress our digital transformation and deliver an excellent customer experience for the people of Medway.

2.20.4 The Strategic Heads of Service are now working to re-organise their teams to deliver a saving of £500k.

2.21 TUPE of Kyndi Recruitment staff to Medway

2.21.1 Officers have been negotiating with Kyndi Ltd. regarding bringing the recruitment agency back in-house. Last year, the agency, net of its direct staffing costs, delivered a contribution of circa £800,000 towards Kyndi's

overheads. As the Council is its primary customer, this represents the potential saving that could be made by bringing the agency back in-house. There will of course be costs associated with the TUPE transfer of the posts back to the Council and the impact on our own management within the HR division, however there should still be a considerable net saving.

2.21.2 Following a report submitted to Cabinet, which was approved at Full Council, the Recruitment team currently working at Kyndi transferred to the Council under TUPE with effect from 1 April 2022. A total of 5 staff transferred to the council (4 placed within HR and 1 within Finance). The Business Change team is now working with the Chief Organisational Culture Officer on the transfer of the directly employed Kyndi agency staff to the Council under TUPE.

2.22 TUPE of Sign Shop Services

2.22.1 Medway Council has historically provided an internal sign making service known as the Sign Shop. The Sign Shop was located at the Civic Centre in Strood and was managed by Waste Services, which is now Environmental Services. The service was transferred to Highways a few years ago and currently runs as a “breakeven” service with costs balanced by income.

2.22.2 The main customers are the Highways Team and Events Team, but the service has the potential to be more commercial and become an income generating business if it was managed within a commercial environment. At Star Chamber on 3 November 2021, it was proposed that the service could transfer to Medway Norse. Following a period of consultation, the service successfully transferred with effect from 1 April 2022.

2.23 Street Naming & Numbering

2.23.1 The Business Change team worked with Highways and the Business Intelligence team regarding the move of Street Naming & Numbering (SNN) from Highways into the GIS team within Business Intelligence.

2.23.2 With the SNN and Local Land & Property Gazetteer (LLPG) functions currently split across two teams there are efficiencies to be gained by combining the functions into one team. Formal consultation was carried out with the affected member of staff and the transfer was implemented with effect from 1 April 2022.

2.24 Enforcement Review

2.24.1 The Business Change Team have worked closely with the Assistant Director of Frontline Services on a review of the Council’s enforcement activity within FLS, e.g. commercial waste, littering, fly tipping, and abandoned vehicles.

2.24.2 A report with initial findings and recommendations was received in September 2021 from a specialist consultant, which the service reviewed. It was immediately identified that in order to support the strategic approach with

partners, there was a need to separate the operational side of Community Safety and Environmental Enforcement from the Community Safety Partnership. Following discussion and agreement with the member of staff, the role has been amended so that it is now solely responsible for managing the Community Safety Partnership and all that it entails.

2.24.3 Another area of Frontline Services that underwent some immediate change was within Registration Services. Covid-19, and some major legislative changes in the registration area, has meant that the need for a full-time dedicated Superintendent registrar post is now required. The responsibility had been held as part of the Head of Service role, however following discussion and agreement with the member of staff they have left the Head of Service position and taken up the role of Superintendent Registrar instead.

2.24.4 Both changes took effect from 1 October 2021 and the post of Head of Regulatory Services was filled on 4 January 2022 after an internal recruitment process.

2.25 Parking Enforcement & Maintenance Review

2.25.1 The Business Change carried out a review of the Parking Enforcement & Maintenance team to address capacity issues of the current Parking Enforcement & Maintenance Manager.

2.25.2 The proposal was to separate the Enforcement & Maintenance functions, creating a new Parking Maintenance team. These changes will improve the service by allowing the current Parking Enforcement and Maintenance Manager to concentrate on delivering the operational functions of the enforcement service. It will also enable the provision of a dedicated resource to manage the car parks and their maintenance, whilst also taking responsibility for developing the car parks, including transformation projects such as the rollout of ANPR and EV charging.

2.25.3 Following a consultation process, the new Parking Maintenance Manager post was filled on 17 January 2022.

b) Digital update

2.26 Website usage

2.26.1 In the past year, [Medway.gov.uk](https://www.medway.gov.uk) has continued to see high numbers of visitors to the site.

2.26.2 Between 29 May 2021 and 28 May 2022, there were 19,547,546 page views compared with 20,395,439 in the same period the year before. Despite a slight decrease in site traffic year-on-year, these figures represent a 25% increase on the same period just two years ago, sustaining the growth in usage seen during the Covid-19 pandemic.

2.26.3 The top 5 most popular pages in the site (29 May 2021 to 28 May 2022) were:

Page	Total page views
Medway.gov homepage	657,452
Book a vehicle into a household waste and recycling centre	202,568
Waste and recycling homepage	122,088
Council tax and benefits homepage	119,319
Medway Park sports centre homepage	115,846

3. Digital accessibility

- 3.1 In September 2018, legislation came into force which requires public sector organisations to make sure all new websites, mobile applications, documents, and systems they create (or purchase) be accessible for all citizens.
- 3.2 From September 2020, this requirement also includes older websites created prior to the legislation coming into force, like Medway.gov.uk. Compliance is overseen by the Central Digital and Data Office (CDDO) within the Cabinet Office, on behalf of the Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC).
- 3.3 The Digital team, responsible for Medway.gov.uk, continues to work hard to ensure the council's primary customer contact channel remains as accessible as possible and compliant with the law. Colleagues who run other websites on behalf of the council are routinely made aware of the regulations and their obligations.
- 3.4 In November 2021, Medway.gov.uk was audited by the CDDO and found not to be compliant with accessibility legislation. Some technical issues, problems with PDF documents and the content of our accessibility statement were highlighted as problems.
- 3.5 The CDDO gave Medway Council until February 2022 to address the issues or face the prospect of financial penalties and referral to the EHRC.
- 3.6 Thanks to a huge effort by the Digital team, upon the CDDO's return audit in February, all those issues were either resolved, removed from the site or a suitable action plan in place to fix remaining issues. The CDDO therefore did not have cause to refer the council to the EHRC.
- 3.7 The work to ensure compliance with the legislation continues. The publication of PDF documents on Medway.gov.uk and other council websites is a particular problem, as the file format is notoriously inaccessible.

- 3.8 However, the Digital team have been fixing thousands of documents so that people who use assistive technology, such as screen readers, will still be able to access them on Medway.gov.uk.
- 3.9 The number of inaccessible documents on the website has reduced from 2,125 in May 2021 to just 817 in June 2022. We will have resolved all the issues with PDFs on Medway.gov.uk by November 2022.
- 3.10 The intervention of the CDDO has served to remind us of the seriousness of the issue and the Digital team, through their Accessibility Working Group comprised of colleagues from ICT, HR, and Communications, have developed an action plan to address ongoing engagement and compliance with the legislation amongst services within the council.
- 3.11 The Digital team now regularly attend Equalities Board meetings to report on the topic and are developing a compliance process and policy to ensure greater governance of the creation of websites, apps and systems following Internal Audit recommendations in December 2021.
- 3.12 The Digital team is also organising a training package for all council officers to ensure everyone understands their responsibilities concerning accessibility. The training will be available during Q2 2022-23.

4. Covid recovery and Customer Ready cell

- 4.1 The Digital team was part of the council's Covid Tactical Command Group and worked with colleagues to keep Medway.gov.uk up to date and accurate during the Covid-19 pandemic and related restrictions.
- 4.2 The Digital team led a 'Customer Ready' cell with CABS colleagues as part of the Recovery phase, responsible for coordinating timely information from colleagues to be made available online or by phone as part of the government's roadmap out of restrictions.
- 4.3 Feedback from customers about the dedicated Covid-19 pages created on Medway.gov.uk was very positive:
"Easy to use – thank you!"
"Always up to date. Thanks!"
"I found this page so easy to use and I wouldn't alter it at all. THANK YOU to Medway Council for the way they have handled this dreadful covid pandemic. Well done"
"Excellent page, excellent services. Many thanks"
- 4.4 Whilst no longer featuring amongst the most popular pages on the site owing to restrictions lifting, our Covid-19 information was nevertheless well used – particularly concerning information related to testing – reflecting work undertaken to improve our content on the subject in response to user

demand. The top 5 most popular Covid-19 pages (29 May 2021 to 28 May 2022) were:

Page	Total page views
Coronavirus homepage	116,365
Coronavirus testing	47,071
How to get a symptom-free test	32,254
Coronavirus symptom-free testing	18,370
Coronavirus symptom-free home test kits	11,965

5. New online services

5.1 During the past year, the Digital team has continued to build a range of new online services (transactions such as apply, report, book, pay or request) to support customers to transact with the council online.

5.2 Recent new online services include:

5.2.1 Apply for a household support grant/the household support fund

5.2.1.1 Building on the platform of NHS test and trace payment applications that were provided online during the pandemic, the Digital team have recently created online services to allow customers to apply for financial support for their household.

5.2.1.2 The household support grant application has had 4,740 applications since launch on 10 November 2021, with over £65,000 paid out to 3,029 eligible applicants.

5.2.1.3 The household support fund – an extension of the government grant scheme – launched on 28 April 2022 and allows those who need support with household costs, such as rent arrears, to apply to the council for assistance. The joint project comprising colleagues from Digital, MRBS and Housing has received 1,095 applications so far, with just over £71,000 support provided to eligible applicants.

5.2.2 Apply for a bulky waste collection

5.2.2.1 The Digital team recently worked alongside colleagues in ICT, Finance, CABS, and Waste Services to redevelop the platform used by residents to book and pay for bulky waste collections.

- 5.2.2.2 The multi-disciplinary team used Agile project management methodology and user-experience best practice principles to deliver the project from inception to go-live in less than 12 weeks.
- 5.2.2.3 Since launch on 30 March 2022, 2,242 customers have booked their bulky waste collection online, which represents 82% of all bulky bookings.
- 5.2.2.4 The new platform is used by colleagues in CABS to take bookings over the telephone and offers these officers an improved user experience too, whilst giving them greater visibility of bookings than before, improving interactions with customers over the telephone.
- 5.2.2.5 Whereas the old online service was showing its age and had begun to attract some criticism, feedback from users of the improved online service has been overwhelmingly positive:

“No need to improve this page as it is very easy to understand. I will definitely arrange for a bulk collection in the next month. Well done Medway Council.”

“No need to improve it is very easy to understand.”

5.2.3 Apply for a parking permit

- 5.2.3.1 Following the launch of the online Essential User permit service in February 2022, all parking permits offered by the council can be applied for online.
- 5.2.3.2 There are a total of 16 different permit types available for application and purchase through the council website, including resident and business permits, resident support and trader’s permits, carer’s permits, and car park season tickets.
- 5.2.3.3 Following the lifting of Covid-19 restrictions the Digital team resumed work with Parking Services to create online applications and back-office workflow for each permit. This has allowed customers to apply or renew at their convenience and has reduced manual effort for parking staff in handling paper applications.
- 5.2.3.4 Customers are still able to apply for their permits via email, post, and telephone, but with the aim of helping reduce climate change, Parking Services encourage applicants to apply online. So far in 2022-23, for our most popular resident permit, this has resulted in 70% of applications being made online.

5.2.4 Apply for daily visitor vouchers

- 5.2.4.1 An online service for vouchers was initially created in 2020 during the pandemic, owing to the closure of council offices. The service received positive feedback from customers and staff, however, due to technical constraints, the service limited customers to one online transaction a month.
- 5.2.4.2 Additional transactions were not recorded centrally, and this reduced the overall customer experience and ease with which Parking Services could manage the scheme and order stock.
- 5.2.4.3 In April 2022, the Digital team released a major iteration of the vouchers online service, allowing households and businesses to buy as many of their monthly allowance of 50 vouchers online, in as many transactions as they choose. These vouchers are then posted to them for a small fee or can be collected from their community hub of choice for free.
- 5.2.4.4 This iteration of the service has seen an increase in customer satisfaction, ensures a central repository for all voucher sale data and addresses outstanding Internal Audit recommendations concerning reporting and reconciliation.
- 5.2.4.5 The updated service has also seen a reduction in the number of telephone calls into Parking Services, which has reduced demand on the team's time, whilst also reducing queues in community hubs, as voucher collections are pre-prepared by council officers.
- 5.2.4.6 From 6 April to 31 May 2022 there have been a total of 1,869 sales of daily vouchers, 1,630 (87%) of which were made online. Overall, this equates to just over 30,000 vouchers and £63,000 income.

5.2.5 Make an information request

- 5.2.5.1 The Digital team has been working with Information Governance colleagues to improve the process of Freedom of Information, Environmental Information and Subject Access requests.
- 5.2.5.2 In a first phase, we updated the Publication Scheme to help customers find information without needing to submit an FOI.
- 5.2.5.3 Secondly, we created an online service for customers to make their request through the website, which improved the quality of information received by the Information Governance team, reducing their need to clarify the nature of requests following submission.

5.2.5.4 The Digital team have recently finished the design and build of the back-office workflow for processing requests within Jadu, which will replace the existing case management system.

5.2.5.5 When the process launches in late Summer, requests submitted by customers using the online form will create a case which can easily be assigned to the appropriate person within the council for a response.

5.2.5.6 The stream-lined process will reduce the amount of data-entry required of the Information Governance team and will enhance the quality of responses being sent. Executive Assistants will also assume responsibility for overseeing the coordination of responses from services within their divisions and there will be a clear audit trail of who has interacted with the case.

5.2.5.7 Automated reminders will be sent by the Jadu system to responsible officers, prompting them to respond to requests in a timely manner.

5.2.5.8 The Digital team are currently developing the communications and training plans for colleagues ahead of launch.

5.2.6 Apply for a First Home

5.2.6.1 This service allows housing developers to apply on behalf of home buyers for the First Homes scheme, a discounted market sale housing scheme introduced by the government.

5.2.6.2 Launched on 31 March 2022, the first phase of our online service allows applicants to provide documents to the Planning team for assessment and for officers to request further evidence or information from the applicant.

5.2.6.3 Some of the first applications received so far relate to properties built at Whiffens Avenue by Medway Development Company.

5.2.7 Other online services

5.2.7.1 Alongside the above services delivered, the Digital team has also been working on the following transactional services, which have either recently launched or are currently being built:

- Iterations to the household waste and recycling centre booking system to allow for same-day bookings
- Pay for an animal licence
- Apply to board cats or dogs
- Apply for a chaperone licence

- Request approval to recruit to a Medway council vacancy

6. Improvements to Medway.gov.uk

6.1 The design and information architecture of Medway.gov.uk continuously evolves based on user feedback, data analysis and changes in service provision. In recent months, the Digital team has worked with colleagues and users to deliver a range of improvements to the website, including for:

6.1.1 Adult social care

6.1.1.1 The Digital team has been supporting the Adult social care front door programme to:

- reduce calls
- free up professional time
- offer customers the right tools and information to help themselves
- help customers find what they are searching for online

6.1.1.2 The Digital team is working on a 'smart answer' decision tree which will help young people transitioning to adulthood understand what their options are.

6.1.1.3 This builds on work with subject matter experts in Adult Social Care and Business Change colleagues to rationalise the content on the adult social care pages on Medway.gov.uk.

6.1.1.4 The tool will guide young people to local resources, services, and advice on Medway.gov.uk and other websites.

6.1.2 Care Leaver Local Offer

6.1.2.1 We recently overhauled the design of the Care Leaver Local Offer in response to feedback from service users.

6.1.2.2 The new design is targeted specifically at the users of the content and was informed by analysis of how users were interacting with the website. We used heatmaps and other behaviour-tracking techniques to improve user journeys and plug gaps in content.

6.1.2.3 The redesign went live in May 2022 and is being reviewed by service users pending further iterations.

6.1.3 Ukraine support in Medway

6.1.3.1 Our [Ukraine Support for Medway](#) webpage went live on 4 April 2022 in response to the ongoing conflict and refugee crisis.

6.1.3.2 A suite of carefully curated information has been drawn together in collaboration with the Communications team and colleagues in the working group to support both Ukrainian refugees arriving in Medway and their sponsor families.

6.1.3.3 The resource collates information from various sources, such as the UK Government, and provides users with a directory of services and support available within Medway, including information for anyone wishing to get involved in helping.

6.1.4 Medway Sport web presence

6.1.4.1 The Digital team designed a promotional landing page for the “It’s Time” premier membership marketing campaign for the Sports team. The content changed on a weekly basis to target different audience segments as part of the campaign, coordinated with Communications and Marketing colleagues.

6.1.4.2 Alongside the campaign, the whole sport section of the council website was refreshed to present and consistent and modern design.

6.1.4.3 Development is ongoing to introduce social media feeds onto pages within the Medway Sport section of the site to enable the service to share urgent updates about sports centres more widely.

6.1.5 Climate change redesign

6.1.5.1 Recently, all the pages on Medway.gov.uk dedicated to our climate change agenda have been refreshed. The pages now each carry the campaign branding throughout.

6.1.5.2 We have also extended the offer within this section of the site by creating pages to help organisations (such as schools and businesses in different industries) work towards being carbon neutral. This content is complemented by case studies featuring local citizens.

6.1.5.3 We have published and increased visibility within the website of schemes like Solar Together (solar panel group purchase scheme).

6.1.5.4 In the Autumn of 2021, to coincide with COP26, the Digital team created a facility for citizens to book places at a series of virtual climate change events. Nearly 1,000 people accessed the page and used the booking system during the fortnight of events.

6.1.6 Medway.gov.uk homepage redesign

6.1.6.1 The design of the homepage on Medway.gov.uk has remained relatively unchanged since its launch in 2018.

6.1.6.2 Based on how we can observe site users interacting with the homepage, we plan to make some changes to the page to improve the user journey.

6.1.6.3 We are collecting data from navigational heatmaps and site analytics to inform our design and ensure that visitors can still find the information they are looking for with ease.

6.1.6.4 For example, in the few years since the site launched users have demonstrated an increasing preference for searching the site using the search bar. This is in comparison to our current design which was informed by observation of users navigating to the various sections of the site using clickable links. Our redesign will feature a more prominent search function as a result.

7. New websites

7.1 The Digital team is directly supporting the design and development of the following websites being created by colleagues within the council:

- Medway Housing Online
- Medway Can
- Medway Leisure Bookings

7.1.1 In each case, the Digital team has reviewed the site from both a usability perspective and for compliance with the accessibility regulations and our digital standards.

7.1.2 In some cases, we have provided external suppliers with design assets to ensure a holistic appearance complimentary to the design of Medway.gov.uk.

7.1.3 Where a website has not met our obligations against the accessibility regulations or our digital standards, we continue to liaise with the service areas and suppliers to ensure compliance is achieved and issues fixed.

7.1.4 Where feasible, members of the Digital team obtain direct access into the systems on which the websites operate, and we can apply these fixes ourselves.

8. Other digital projects

8.1 In addition to our work on websites and online services, the Digital Team is involved in the following projects:

8.2 An app for young offenders and their practitioners

8.2.1 In collaboration with colleagues in ICT, the Digital team have been involved in an exciting project, sponsored by Loughborough University, designing an app for children in the youth justice system to use to communicate with their caseworker between scheduled intervention meetings.

8.2.2 The app will help the caseworker to maintain engagement with the child and work towards improving the likelihood of a successful outcome for them.

8.2.3 The design of the app has been informed by working directly with the children and their caseworkers and they have received early prototypes of the app (wireframes) to review.

8.2.4 The children have been closely involved at all stages of the design and development of the app and have fed back on the product vision and designs. The children are currently deciding on their preferred name for the app.

8.2.5 Loughborough University colleagues contribute research findings to ensure that the app remains child-centred during the ongoing development phase.

8.3 Medway Healthy Schools programme

8.3.1 Building on the success of the Healthy Workplaces scheme, Digital colleagues and Public Health will shortly begin work on a similar programme for Medway Schools.

8.3.2 The scheme will incorporate an enhanced web presence, online forms and case workflow for schools and Public Health colleagues to work together to increase physical activity, health and wellbeing for students and staff at participating schools.

8.3.3 Schools will have to make a range of commitments to make their schools healthy and to which they will be held accountable. Successful progression through the scheme and achievement of those commitments will see those schools accredited by the council as a Healthy School and the school awarded various levels of award throughout the process.

9. Digital Service Standards and Showcase

9.1 To support the growing digital culture at the council and maintain high standards, the Digital team has updated the [Digital Service Standards](#).

9.2 These standards apply to all colleagues looking to create an online presence for their service. They are available to colleagues and partner agencies we commission.

9.3 The standards cover any digital solution (for example: website, app, chat, or system) and apply to written content, design, forms, and functionality.

9.4 These standards follow best practice and have been approved by CMT.

10. Council Plan and Service Improvement

10.1 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 and Cabinet.

10.2 A new overarching Council Strategy was introduced in 20/21, following a review of the corporate reporting timetable involving the Council's key strategies and plans. The overarching Council Strategy sets out the Council's vision and is a more outcomes focused document than the Council Plan, without all 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.

10.3 At Full Council on 17 February 2022, it was agreed to produce a short-term Council Strategy and Council Plan for 22/23. The Council Strategy and Plan for 23/24 will be considered by Cabinet and Full Council in February 2023.

10.4 Presenting performance, finance and risk monitoring together is intended to support informed decision making. In June 2019, the Cabinet agreed that the strategic risks 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.

10.5 In 2021/22, Council Values replaced Ways of Working. Council Values underpin everything we do. They guide our behaviour, decisions and choices in the way we design and deliver our services. They are:

- Financial resilience
- Digital enablement
- Creativity and innovation
- Working together to empower communities
- Tackle climate change
- Child-friendly



11. Customer and Business Support (CABS)

11.1 Customer and Business Support (CABS), launched in October 2018, replaces the two services previously known as Business and Administration Support Service (BASS) and Customer Contact. This report refers only to activities aligned to the former BASS, as previously defined. CABS provides a professional customer and administration support function 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. CRT conducts regular complaints analysis and provides a reporting service to CMT; CRT also liaises with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) over referrals, remedies and learning. Although Blue Badges are mentioned as part of the administration portfolio, CABS owns this service end to end.

11.2 Administration is operated as a shared service, where staff resource is flexed 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 'Lagan', the council's CRM (customer

relationship management system) and a broad range of other back-office council systems.

- 11.3 Home working has remained a prominent feature of CABS operations, in the aftermath of the pandemic. Home working helped to maintain service delivery through Covid-19 restrictions and has proven practical and popular since. That said, staff are now attending office premises on a rotating basis, for face to face 121 meetings and wellbeing checks, for training, and to re-familiarise with, and to support, colleagues. This helps to promote a sense of workplace community. The service provides digital assistance to customers to complete online forms and has used Microsoft (MS) Teams (as well as face to face) for conducting panel hearings for Social Care complaints, and for meeting minute-taking. Some administration tasks, such as scanning and printing, continue to require a routine office presence, and CABS continues to support this. Regardless of the different ways of working, good management contact and supervision is maintained and hybrid working arrangements have not adversely impacted on performance.
- 11.4 The CABS ethos continues to be one of continuous process improvement, and support for the transformation agenda. The intention is to give customers more modern and streamlined ways of doing business, giving them the choice as to how they interact with the authority. Online forms are used wherever possible, alongside traditional service request methods; as an example, around 64% of customer complaints are submitted through the digital channel. Mindful that some residents may not have access to digital media, CABS offers a 'digital assist' service, supporting customers applying for a Blue Badge or Bus Pass where they are unable to use online forms themselves. The future is likely to feature multi-channel customer interactions, with the onus on customer choice. It should be noted that over 75% of Blue Badge applications are completed online without the need for 'digital assist' support.
- 11.5 CABS owns and manages the authority's Blue Badge service, receiving around 530 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, CABS officers can complete an application over the telephone with the customer.
- 11.6 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 CABS officers and applications from customers with complex conditions are subject to further assessment by CABS Expert Assessors. Eligibility can sometimes be established by the Expert Assessors using "desk-based" assessment

methods, while others require a face-to-face assessment with the customer to correctly establish eligibility.

- 11.7 Both the council and government websites advise that it can take around 12 weeks to decide eligibility. During 2021-22 CABS received 6,340 Blue Badge applications, 95% of which were assessed and processed within 12 weeks of the application being received. Further, 4,100 (68%) of the 6,340 were assessed and processed within 30 working days (six calendar weeks). Of those that remain unprocessed, most are awaiting customer action (e.g., providing evidence or making a payment) and others are applications that arrived in the final month of 2021-22, so would not have reasonably been completed at the time of assessing performance.
- 11.8 CABS has continued to support the council's apprenticeship programme throughout 2021-22; promoting four apprentices to permanent officer posts and recruiting a new cohort of three apprentices. CABS has adopted the best practice of working with the Apprenticeship Academy to support apprentices.

12. Complaints Policy and Management

- 12.1 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. The CRT acts as the interface with the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) and as guardian of complaint response thoroughness and timeliness.
- 12.2 The Covid-19 pandemic impacted on the volume of complaints and compliments, suppressing the former and boosting the latter (customers were more vocal in expressing their thanks for council services). This is a developing picture in the 'post-Covid world' but the indication is that complaints are increasing, although not, thus far, to the levels of 2019-20 (i.e. pre Covid). In Medway, complaint investigations and responses continued uninterrupted, throughout the pandemic, as colleagues adapted quickly to working from home and working in different ways, for example, by using technology such as MS Teams for independent complaint investigations and statutory social care complaint panels. Despite such challenges, complaints performance remained positive in all areas and for 2021-22 all areas far exceeded performance targets. The CRT produced regular performance reports and shared these with senior management teams throughout the year to maintain a focus on strong performance.
- 12.3 The Customer Relations Manager delivers regular Customer Complaint training, through MS Teams and in person. A regular and very well-attended Complaint Handlers Groups is also operated, to review complaints performance and trends, share learning and develop complaint handling skills. The onus is very much on resolving complaints fully, early in the complaints process to prevent escalation to stage 2 or to the Ombudsman.

- 12.4 In consultation with the Complaint Handlers Group and Service Managers, the council's website is kept up to date so that pages which offer information and access to the complaints and compliments process also helpfully direct customers to a range of options. This includes raising a service request, where this is a more appropriate means to solve a customer issue.
- 12.5 Popularity for using the council's online form continued to grow and in 2021-22 almost 64% of customers chose to use this fast and efficient method to raise their complaint. The Customer Relations Team continue to accept complaints made in person, in writing or over the telephone where this is the complainants preferred method.
- 12.6 The 2021-22 annual complaints and compliments report identified that complaint volumes increased, following a significant fall in the previous year, during the Covid 19 pandemic, although volumes have not returned to the levels usually seen pre Covid.
- 12.7 Corporate compliments returned to normal levels during 2021-22, with 298 compliments being made about council services, following a significant peak in the previous year, during the Covid 19 pandemic. This means that for every four complaints about council services, there was at least one compliment.
- 12.8 Waste Services, Medway Norse and CABS were the areas receiving the highest volume of compliments, but there were also several compliments for council as a whole, thanking the authority for continuing to deliver services and for providing support during the pandemic.
- 12.9 Performance for stage one corporate complaints reduced by 1.4 percentage points compared to the previous year, but still achieved 87.2%, exceeding the council's 10-day response target of 80%. Year to date performance, at the end of May 2022 is 81.8%.
- 12.10 Performance for responding to the more complex stage two corporate complaints within 15 working days increased by 1.9 percentage points compared to the previous year, and achieved 81.7%, again exceeding the council's target of 75%. Year to date performance, at the end of May 2022 is 79.3%.
- 12.11 Performance was also strong in both Children's and Adult's social care complaints, with Children's Social Care achieving 96.2% and Adult Social Care achieving 82.9%, both far exceeding the council's target of 75%.
- 12.12 Performance reports are shared each month with Service Managers and Assistant Directors, and quarterly and annual analysis reports highlight issues that are raised from complaints so that services can learn and make improvements. Assistant Directors actively discuss the findings of these

reports with their Service Managers to disseminate the messages and embed learning within services. The Complaint Handlers Group is also a successful channel to share learning from Ombudsman findings.

- 12.13 The CRT have continued to closely monitor the rate by which complaints escalate to stage two, and the reasons for this. These findings are included in the quarterly and annual reports and discussed at Complaint Handlers Groups.
- 12.14 The top three reasons for escalation during 2021-22 have continued to be:
- Challenging the council's decision
 - Stage one complaint did not fully address the response
 - Promised actions were not carried out at stage one
- 12.15 The CRT continue to embed the message through reporting, at Complaint Handler Groups and through internal Customer Complaint training, that positive actions at stage one may help to reduce the likelihood of complaints being referred upwards. Such recommendations include conducting thorough investigations, including a root cause analysis, ensuring that all points are carefully considered and that responses are supported with evidence, and that complaint remedies are delivered promptly and monitored for completion.
- 12.16 The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman is expected to release its annual report in July 2022, and an analysis of its findings will be presented to the CMT later in the year.

13. HR

13.1 Employee engagement

13.2 The refresh of the Medway Maker engagement champions in 2021 has seen the group develop and is gradually embedding itself into the culture of the organisation as an objective 'sounding board' for prospective change and new initiatives. The group have been active in areas such as the development of the Our Ways of Working Policy, offering ideas and concerns relating to office moves at Gun Wharf, Climate Change initiatives, wellbeing initiatives, supporting ICT new processes and more.

13.3 With the introduction of hybrid working employee engagement has needed to adapt to incorporate both face-to-face and electronic engagement practices and virtual drop-in sessions where staff can join focus groups and information sessions on Microsoft Teams has proved popular. An Employee Engagement Toolkit for Managers has been produced and provides a series of useful tips, tools and suggestions to support our managers engage with their staff both virtually and in the workplace.

13.4 Several short surveys have been sent to staff around new ways of working

and internal communications. The annual staff engagement survey will go out to staff in September, this will provide a valuable insight of staff opinion across a wide range of employment areas.

14. Internal communications

14.1 Internal communications continue to work closely with HR and Employee Engagement to share important information with the organisation on items such as policy changes, commemoration days, staff benefits and information for managers. The function has developed an internal communications planner to enable proactive messaging and engagement opportunities around key dates in the council calendar.

14.2 An internal communications survey recently went out to all staff to gain feedback on the current ways of communication and suggestions for improvement. Following the survey, many new initiatives will be implemented including a regular manager briefing, which will bullet point key information relevant to that period of time; more staff related news including newcomers and organisational changes; and a bulletin which will focus on different members of senior and middle management.

Other work includes:

- Working closely with the HR schools team to produce a termly newsletter for school staff;
- Coordination of International Workers Memorial Day;
- Promotion of the Make a Difference staff recognition awards and creating sponsorship pack;
- Development of a new HR MedSpace page;
- Development of Our Ways of Working policy MedSpace page, as well as regular communications to staff;
- Working with equality forums to produce articles for equality days throughout the year;
- Regular promotion of available training for staff from Workforce Development;
- Production of Monthly HR news roundup;
- Developing an annual video to commemorate Remembrance Day
- Working alongside the workplace chaplain to promote articles and events
- Working alongside and promoting the work of the Medway Makers engagement champions
- Promoting employee benefits on a regular basis and creating a one-stop shop for all benefits on MEDSPACE
- Working with services on initiatives such a informative drop-in sessions around areas such as wellbeing and climate response.

15. Employee benefits

- 15.1 The council constantly views its offer of benefits to colleagues. We currently offer a wide range of benefits, including shopping discounts, days out, employee assistance programme, green travel schemes and more. These are promoted to staff on a regular basis. The council seeks to develop its employee benefit offer for employees and plans to implement a salary sacrifice cycle scheme and car MOT and servicing scheme in the autumn. The council has introduced a climate response volunteer day as part of its special leave provisions allowing teams and individuals to take one day per year to undertake climate change activity (from an approved list) within the local community.
- 15.2 Employee Value Proposition (EVP) – Our People Promise
Work is ongoing to develop our Employee Value Proposition (EVP) or ‘People Promise’. This sets out information about what individuals can expect in terms of the ‘deal’ or psychological contract between employer and employee when they come to work for the council. In other words, it answers two fundamental questions for individuals: i.e.
(i) ‘why should I work for this organisation – what makes it stand out against the rest?’ and (ii) ‘why should I stay?’
- 15.3 The EVP is a comprehensive collection of benefits an organisation uses to attract and retain talent. It captures the essence of an organisation by focusing on the compensation, benefits, career development, work environment, and culture the company offers its employees. It can also be tailored to attract the ‘ideal’ employee displaying the traits and characteristics the organisation desires. Our EVP is summarised in diagrammatic format below and will form an important part of the council’s attraction strategy going forward.



16. Recruitment and attraction

- 16.1 We have created corporate social media posts to regularly appear on Facebook, Instagram and Linked-in to promote our current vacancies and increase our social media reach. We continue to work with JobsGoPublic ('JGP') which is our online Applicant Tracking System provider, to improve their system and review the user journey. We have created new Recruiting Manager Guidance information forthcoming advising of the new interview module, which will be a quicker and easier module to use, giving a better experience for our recruiting managers.

17. Apprenticeship Academy

- 17.1 The Council's Apprenticeship Academy continues to flourish, and our statistics continue to impress, and we were one of only a very few local authorities to meet the challenging five-year Public Sector Target (PST) of 2.3%, every year since its introduction in 2017 (rolling average). It has been announced that the PST will continue for one more year, 2022-23, and be a stand-alone statistic, not attaching to the previous five years. From 2023 the target will be removed, although we will continue to have to report annually to the Dept for Education on our apprenticeship statistics.

- 17.2 In 2021-22 we recorded 77 new apprenticeship programme starts, managing to achieve our PST again, despite the ongoing global pandemic.
- 17.3 Apprenticeship programmes 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. We are now on our second cohorts of Social Worker and Occupational Therapist apprentices, and unlike many of our NHS and other local authority colleagues, offer a unique and valuable development opportunity to existing staff via these routes. Organisationally we chose not to upskill existing staff in their current roles but to create apprenticeship roles, meaning that the staff could fully concentrate on all the aspects of their apprenticeship programme and immerse themselves in the learning opportunity. This route has been recognised by the university as offering a superior learning and development opportunity to the apprentices.
- 17.4 The age range of our apprentices directly demonstrates the versatility of our apprenticeship provision too, with our current youngest apprentice being 17 years old and our oldest being 55 years old. We are keen to support diversity and inclusion and 13% of our apprentices (in apprenticeship posts) declared a disability. We also strongly support the social mobility of young people within Medway and 19% of our apprentices (in apprenticeship posts 2020-21) reside in the four wards, recognised as Medway's most deprived.
- 17.5 Since the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy in 2017 we have commenced in excess of 450 apprenticeship programmes, at a cost of over £2.7m. 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.
- 17.6 With the removal of pandemic socialising restrictions, we have been able to reintroduce face-to-face events for our apprentices and the monthly forum meetings are well attended once again; giving our young apprentices the opportunity to mix with their peers and network collectively together.

18. Kickstart

- 18.1 The team led on the coordination of the Council's bid for the Government's Kickstart project initiative to provide 16-24-year olds with six-month job placements. By 31 March 2022 (the last day for new starts on the programme) we had placed 60 people across the organisation. With many moving onto permanent employment, post placement either within the council or externally.
- 18.2 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. Level 2 Employability Skills qualification, functional skills qualifications in English and Maths, interview skills and cv writing training.

- 18.3 As recognition of the success of this programme at the Council, we have been nominated by the DWP for an outstanding employer award, in the Youth Employment category. The awards event is to be held on 17 June 2022 and, although we have been told we have won, this has not been formally announced.

19. Baseline Personnel Security Standards Project

- 19.1 In April 2021, The Employee Authentication Service (EAS-R) audit uncovered widespread non-compliance of LAs undertaking the necessary Baseline Personnel Security Standard (BPSS) checks.

- 19.2 In line with Cabinet Office guidance, the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and Local Authorities (LAs) highlights that LAs must implement the Baseline Personnel Security Standard (BPSS) checks prior to users obtaining access to DWP and HM Revenues & Customs (HMRC) data. This MoU requirement has been in place since 2011.

- 19.3 Lack of compliance with this BPSS requirement has serious implications for DWP in relation to the continued sharing of data with us. They, however, realised that removing access immediately would have had a detrimental impact on our ability to deliver benefits and initiatives that data sharing supports, so they gave us until 12 April 2022 to complete our checks and upload the compliance data.

- 19.4 HR, Finance and ICT colleagues worked collaboratively to set up an efficient compliance checks application via Service Desk to ensure all employees with access to the specified Government systems had all required checks completed, before the deadline. New employees who require BPSS checks prior to their being able to access data from the systems, will have this work completed as part of their pre recruitment checks.

20. Recruitment activity

20.1 Activity since April 2021

- Offer made across the council in excess of 300
- Jobs approved 208 (Excluding kick start, blanket approval, apprentice, employability points scheme and vacancies left over because of Business Change activities)
- DBS processed 1561
- Acting up and Additional Duties processed 46

21. HR Support to Schools

- 21.1 A quarterly schools newsletter has been produced for schools to keep them updated and informed in relation the changes to how our schools service is now structured and to keep them abreast of any important people related matters. The Senior HR Consultant and HR Consultant (schools) have been meeting with customers to introduce themselves and used the opportunity to gain feedback on the service. A plan to review HR schools policies has been formulated and put into action.
- 21.2 The ER team have supported the TUPE transfer process of Will Adams and continue to provide advice and guidance on a wider range of employee relations matters. The ER Support team continue to provide HR administration to a number of schools and man the HR Advice line.
- 21.3 We are looking at our offering to schools across all teams within HR and looking at opportunities to enhance our product.

22. Term Time Only Employees

- 22.1 Like several local authorities, Medway Council introduced a new holiday pay calculation for term time only (TTO) workers to bring the local calculation in line with national best practice as set out in National Joint Council (NJC) terms and conditions (known as the Green Book). Medway Council introduced the new pay calculation from 1 April 2020.
- 22.2 Since the new calculation was introduced in Medway, two trade unions, Unison and GMB, lodged grievances against the council claiming that the pay calculations used for staff working TTO prior to April 2020 disadvantaged them when compared to all year-round staff.
- 22.3 Medway Council sought ACAS involvement and commenced negotiations with trade unions in May 2021 to try to resolve the dispute. A series of meetings were held and in September 2021 Medway Council presented a final employer offer to settle the claim.
- 22.4 Following this, the two trade unions agreed to present the employer final offer to their members. Unison consulted in the form of a ballot whilst GMB held face to face meetings in over 75 schools. The unions had hoped to complete their ballots and surveys before Christmas 2021 but both requested extensions until 11 February 2022. On 18 February 2022, the GMB informed Medway Council that its consultative survey would not be completed until 4 March 2022.
- 22.5 GMB advised that the result of their consultative survey, as of 4 March 2022, indicated the majority of members who responded wished to reject the employer offer (99%.) Unison's ballot response however was 78% in favour of accepting the employer offer.

- 22.6 Many workers in schools and academies across Medway are affected by this dispute, so the council has been working with educational leaders from the outset, to establish a collective approach. Medway Council's offer has the backing of employers across the Medway area who have agreed to mirror the council offer and roll it out to their workers. This approach reduces administrative burden to both employers and trade unions and negates the need for individual trade union consultations with each employer. This approach has the support of the trade unions as well as the employers.
- 22.7 Medway Council has offered the following in final compensation to eligible workers:
- Compensation equivalent to up to two weeks gross pay, for those eligible, dependant on length of service;
 - The compensatory sum will be calculated using current rates of pay at time of payment;
 - The compensatory sum will be based on working hours immediately prior to the new calculation being adopted on 1 April 2020;
 - The compensatory sum will be subject to deductions for tax and National Insurance (NI) and will be pensionable for individuals currently participating in the pension scheme;
- 22.8 Beneficiaries must be in current employment with an appropriate employer such as the council, a medway school or an academy trust and have been in employment in a TTO role at the point of cut off i.e. when the new rate was implemented (on 1 April 2020.)
- 22.9 The Medway employer offer will be formally put to Medway Council employees this summer and schools and academies that are mirroring the process aim to roll the offer out to eligible staff between June and December.

23. Employee Relations

- 23.1 This newly formed HR Consultant team have been on a learning journey in the last year, following completion of their inductions. This team advises, coaches, and supports managers on a variety of ER cases which are often complex in nature. HR Investigation training was completed by a cohort of 20 managers who will now be able to effectively support the HR investigation process, with another cohort planned for September 2022. A new ER casework system has been procured and is on the cusp of going live and we look forward to utilising the management information in the future to guide our proactive efforts and training for managers.
- 23.2 We have developed an, Our Ways of Working policy to reflect the changing nature of how and where roles are undertaken. This involved lots of consultation with managers, staff forums and trade unions. A suite of guidance and a toolkit support the rollout of the policy for both managers and staff, with an area dedicated to this topic on Medspace. The policy rollout involved lots of communication through a variety of sources along with briefing

sessions for staff and managers. We will be reviewing our new ways of working formally in the coming months.

- 23.3 We have continued to provide regular updates via our HR newsletter and remain on hand to answer staff queries through our HR Advice service. We are working with ICT colleagues to exploit all opportunities to enhance the customer experience through service desk and further understand the volume of workload and types of HR issues being raised. We also continue to provide a HR Support shared service to Gravesham Borough Council.
- 23.4 Wellbeing continues to be an area of focus and alongside all of the wellbeing guidance contained within the Our Ways of Working policy we have also produced guidance on supporting those staff who are reluctant to return after the covid pandemic and guidance for staff and managers on the menopause.

24. Learning and Development

- 24.1 Learning and Development have four clearly defined areas of responsibility. This is: the commissioning and delivery of training to our staff and members; The Leadership and Management Academy which offers support and training for aspiring, new and existing managers; The Medway College of Social Care which income generates by offering social care training to external agencies; and the Kent and Medway Social Work Teaching Partnership which uses funds from the Department for Education to support the development of Social Workers from students through to Directors.

25. Courses

- 25.1 In response to lockdown measures, the L&D Team converted many face to face courses into Teams/Zoom compatible to allow staff to keep up to date with their CPD. We also created videos of the easily transferrable courses to ensure we can reach as many staff as possible without additional trainer costs. We are now offering Teams, face to face and video training, along with our elearning suite of courses to meet the diverse learning styles of staff, which aligns to our new hybrid ways of working.
- 25.2 In 2021/22, L&D arranged 963 courses, with 775 running and 188 being cancelled or rearranged. Of these, 677 were delivered via Teams and 98 being delivered face to face, with 515 delivered via in-house colleagues such as the Children's Principle Social Work Team, Health and Safety Team, Youth Service, Public Health as well the dedicated Learning & Development Trainer, these therefore do not have a cost other than time and their salary costs. The remaining 260 courses are externally commissioned training, and the average cost of paid training is £650-750/day.
- 25.3 In 2022/23, as at Q1, L&D have arranged 615 courses, with 508 running and 107 being cancelled or rearranged (this includes forward cancellations).

- 25.4 All externally commissioned training must meet the strict criteria of Statutory, Mandatory or Legislative to be commissioned and all requests are approved by the Head of Service and the relevant Assistant Director.
- 25.5 Learning & Development promote their training services externally which has resulted in bookings from Medway Norse and several other Local Authorities. L&D have also booked a number of conferences and external qualifications that cannot be met by the Apprenticeship Levy, these include Certified Internal Auditor, GDPR Practitioner Training, Diploma in Local Government Law, Trading Standard Practitioner Certificate, Chartered Institute of Housing Diploma and Zoo Licensing.
- 25.6 Staff continue to access e-learning training on a regular basis and use this as both stand alone training and complementary training to our existing offering.

26. Leadership and Management Academy

- 26.1 The Leadership and Management Academy, part of the Learning & Development Team, has established a Leadership Induction that complements the corporate employee induction programme that resides on MEDSPACE. It includes a leadership induction framework guide, a new leader checklist and other development tools that can be used by the new manager – guided by the recruiting manager.
- 26.2 Resources for managers on MEDSPACE has majorly increased with a new knowledge hub, guided conversations, performance management, engagement resources, inclusive leadership, policies useful for managers and training for managers. The next step is introducing a new ‘manager pathway’ for managers so they access resources and training appropriate to their experience and managerial level – aspiring manager; new manager; new manager to Medway and experienced manager. Revamp of the leadership and development pages are underway to reflect the new pathways.
- 26.3 Training to support the new Our Ways of Working policy have been deployed and these are: Improving feedback; Performance management; Intelligent disobedience and Inclusive Manager.
- 26.4 Evaluation of the training will help us measure behaviours learned to support managing hybrid working teams.
- 26.5 The Academy are also working with Public Health (PH) to deliver bespoke management training for managers on the Menopause. A hot topic currently where HR and PH will jointly deliver awareness sessions. We hope this is the first of a long and successful partnership between HR, L&D and PH.
- 26.6 During Q3 we will be introducing a new way for managers to develop their situation handling skills with a new training product that is called What Would You Do? It is an online game designed to bring peers together to work through business issues in a fun, engaging way. It will enable managers of all

experiences to: Create discussion between peers; Share learning and experiences and commit to new and improved behaviours.

- 26.7 The Academy will also be introducing a new, in-house professional development tool called Insight 360 – this can be used by all colleagues within Medway council as part of their career development.

27. Medway College of Social Care

- 27.1 The Medway College of Social Care (MCSC) is an external training company providing Social Care training to care homes/agencies, domiciliary care agencies, personal assistants (Direct Payments from Medway Council and the CCG) and schools across Medway, Kent and other counties. Whilst this is an income generating department of L&D 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.

- 27.2 As the MCSC training is delivered via Face to face and is hands on training, lockdown measures meant that we were not able to offer the full suite of training. With lockdown restrictions lifted, we have been able to offer face to face training, however, take up is lower than pre-covid conditions. We have seen an increase in bespoke training, and these have taken place in the dedicated training room in Medway Adult Education Rochester as well as at the homes of Direct Payment recipients. In addition, MCSC has generated income via the private hire of the dedicated Manual Handling training room located in Medway Adult Education, Rochester building. The rental bookings now around the same as pre-covid times and we are seeing regular bookings of 4-6 sessions per month by external organisations.

- 27.3 In 2021/22, MCSC invoiced a total of £18,916 and the total cost to commission training was £10,237. In 2022/23, we have budgeted to invoice £14,643 and spend £5873 on commissioning training as at Q1. A large percentage of the planned income is as a result of a funding bid to deliver 19 funded Positive Behaviours Support (PBS) courses to professionals and carers in Kent and Medway. This is available to KCC and Medway Council staff as well as professional and carers within Kent and Medway.

- 27.4 Skills for Care have not released the 2022/2023 Direct Employer funding as yet, so this will have an impact on funding for the training of personal assistants of Direct Payment recipients. It is not expected to be released until October 2022.

28. The Kent and Medway Social Work Teaching Partnership

- 28.1 The Kent and Medway Social Work Teaching Partnership (KMTP) is funded by the Department for Education, with an aim to support the teaching and continued learning of Social Workers from Student through to Director level.

The KMTP includes Medway Council (lead partner), Kent County Council, University of Kent and Canterbury Christ Church University. The Teaching Partnership funding has been in place since 2018/19 with ongoing re-submissions for new funding each financial year.

- 28.2 In 2021/22, the Teaching Partnership successfully bid for £104,000, and a further £50,000 mid-financial year. Medway Council received around £52,000 to spend towards the training and upskilling of the social work staff.
- 28.3 The Teaching Partnership was again successful in the 2022/23 funding bid, and the partnership won £86,000, of which Medway Council will receive £27,000 to spend towards the training and upskilling of the social work staff.
- 28.4 The funding requirements include an emphasis on leadership, management, BAME employees and workforce and labour market planning as well as the upskilling of staff.
- 28.5 Learning and Development are currently working with Adults and Children's Social Care Principal Social Workers to determine how these funds will be spent, ensuring they adhere to the strict funding guidelines.

29. Payroll, Pensions and Systems

- 29.1 Payroll have successfully paid and provided a Pensions service for 8,700 employees across all payrolls, Medway, Gravesham, Academies and Kyndi totalling a gross salary bill 2021/22 of approx. £145 million, whilst running recruitment campaigns for 5 vacant posts in various roles. We have successfully migrated all payrolls onto on-line payslips, P45's and P60's due to the HMRC withdrawing hard copy stationary as part of its digitalisation of communications project as from tax year 2020-21.

30. Shared Service

- 30.1 Payroll & Pensions continue to provide a shared service to Gravesham Borough Council, the SLA is still under review with a focus on value for money incorporating all aspects of payroll including the HR and Payroll Integrated system.

31. Pensions

- 31.1 Work continues with the transformation of the system to provide automation and reduce manual intervention. We have 7 payrolls including Medway, Gravesham and Elections with Re-Enrolment due over the coming months of 2022-23, Employers must re-enrol eligible employees into a pension scheme every 3 years and provide a declaration certificate to The Pensions Regulator by a given deadline.

31.2 Teachers Pensions Monthly Calculation Reconciliation (MCR) successfully went live in April 2022. In addition, working collaboratively with the Systems Team, changes from 1st April 2022 migrated all active members to a Career Average Scheme across all payrolls, creating a new pay element which configures and automatically calculates the correct contributions % according to the Employee Salary Bands.

31.3 Local Government Pension, work is ongoing in clearing the inherited backlog of pensions queries along with this year's outstanding Year End queries by a required deadline for KCC to produce the Annual Pension Statements, whilst operating business as usual which involves retirements, estimate requests, opt ins/outs, sending monthly data reports to KCC Pensions fulfilling our Employers administration obligations. We also embark on the iConnect project, this identifies and sends information to KCC of new starters, opt outs, leaver etc automatically together with pay and contributions, reducing time and resource, improving accuracy and efficiency whilst enhancing security. This will be a year long projects as this requires data cleansing and resolution of discrepancies with information held on the KCC records before member matching and onboarding can commence.

32. Schools services

32.1 Unfortunately, we continue to struggle retaining schools/Academies due to them leaving to join Academy Trusts who already have a payroll provider, in addition some maintained schools are changing to another provider due to digitised payroll data reports and costs. We are working with our Maintained schools towards automation, currently rolling out Temporary Data Spreadsheets which will be uploaded onto the payroll system reducing manual data entry from payroll staff and errors, this also reduces the school time scanning individual's data to payroll.

32.2 Payroll have successfully onboarded Abbey Court School (135 employees) onto their own payroll, as a Foundation school and the payroll bill exceeding £3 million; they are required to pay the Apprenticeship Levy to comply with legislation, resulting in a new PAYE scheme being set up following communications with HMRC Compliance Manager with effect from 1st April 2022.

33. Projects

33.1 Payroll are working with other stakeholders in the Council on various projects such as:

- School services, planning the process for the Medway test due in September.
- We will also be working with Democratic services as we begin the planning for the whole Council Elections in May 2023.
- The Term Time settlement payment is due to be implemented imminently once negotiations are completed with trade unions.

- Working with Phoenix and other stakeholders to implement payment of the safety roles Fire Wardens, First Aiders and Evac Chairs project due to the Hybrid working arrangement. There will be a payment due to staff who volunteer and successfully complete all necessary training which will be centrally funded.

34. Sickness MyView Project

- 34.1 Following an internal audit of sickness reporting and monitoring processes, an action plan has been developed to reduce and clarify the channels available for reporting absence and enable more accurate and up to date management information. The HR and Payroll Systems Team aim to move all reporting processes onto My View within Resourecelink thereby removing duplication and multiple data entry. Changes in practice will require updated policy guidance and a clear communications strategy.

35. HR and Payroll Systems Transformation Project

- 35.1 In May 2021, Payroll Systems was brought back under the remit of HR. The Systems Team is responsible for:

- Maintenance of existing systems in use within HR & Payroll
- Development of new functionality or modules in existing systems
- Providing technical support for the implementation of new systems
- Maintenance & development of reporting tools & MI reports

- 35.2 A review of the HR & Payroll systems commenced during 2021/22 with the overall aims of:

- Improving People Experience
- Enabling and Informing Managers
- Maximising Income from External Customers
- Improving Efficiency/Reducing Loss
- Improving Data Quality, Accountability and Responsibility
- Analytics – understanding and ensuring Evidence-Based Decisions

- 35.3 A Project Board is in place to oversee the review with a remit to provide regular updates to the Transformation Board.

36. HR and Payroll Systems Transformation Project Update

- 36.1 During 2021-22 a number of improvements were implemented including:

- Costing substitution - has reduced workload for Payroll not having to manually change cost codes monthly for shared pay elements with Gravesham.
- Employee Bank changes - no longer require Payroll's authorisation process as confirmation email sent at source when employee changes details on MyView.

- Development of a standard suite of payroll reports to use, these are ongoing.
- Payroll worked collaboratively with the Systems team to implement spinal tables and grades of each individual external school customer/ This allows customers to choose when Pay Awards are applied and will reduce the manual intervention by payroll staff.
- Migration to Expenses 2 - improving performance when submitting/authorising claims and facilitate attaching receipts to claims supporting our digitalising programme reducing our reliance on paper. This has also resolved an ongoing issue with the 502 Error message which we have had since going Hosted in 2019, therefore reducing the high level of queries for the HR & Payroll teams.
- Implemented generic Court Order pay elements – this will simplify the process for data entering Court Orders against employee records and improve the accuracy of Third-Party Payments.

36.2 In 2022 Q1 the following were implemented:

- Re-configured the Teachers' Pension Scheme in Resourcelink and migrated all existing records to the re-configured scheme. Benefits include reducing workload in payroll when processing pay runs
- Re-configured Special Leave to allow recording of the type of leave being granted and to enable MI reporting.
- Developed a suite of reports to support monthly returns & reconciliation for Local Government Pension Schemes.

36.3 The systems transformation project has, at its early stages, focussed mainly on improving basic system requirements and security following many years of low investment in and lack of development of the HR and payroll system. A new contract which commenced April 2022 was signed with Zellis for Resourcelink to remain as our current preferred system. Over the next two years many improvements are planned with new modules being introduced that will continue to transform the way we work.

36.4 As Resourcelink migrates to a Human Capital Management (HCM) cloud based system in 2022/23, it will unlock a better and more inclusive user interface and access to Myview will be enabled via mobile technology. Individuals will have much more access and control over their human resource (HR) data and managers will have accurate HR information available to them in real time to aid planning and support talent management.

37. ICT

37.1 Gun Wharf Moves

37.1.1 ICT and Business Change completed the Gun Wharf moves to free up space on Level 2 for MOJ to occupy. This involves the delivery of hardware to end users that aligns with HR's new "our ways of working" policy;

37.1.2 Distributed 250 computers and 375 new docking station screens.

37.2 ICON Chip and pin upgrade

37.2.1 ICT worked with Business change to perform the upgrades to the ICON payment system. This enabled the organisation to use the ICON Chip and Pin devices on Windows 10 or higher machines. This also has helped in the organisations PSN compliancy that is currently going through its annual review and tests.

37.3 Windows 10 Migration

37.3.1 The libraries had several unsupported Windows 7 machines that were not been migrated to Windows 10 due issues around the ability to take card payments with pin pads. This has now been completed since the ICON upgrade and Medway Council no longer has any windows 7 machines running on its I.T. estate.

37.4 Mitel Telephony Replacement

37.4.1 All the Cisco handset and telephony users have been successfully migrated to the new Mitel system. The Cisco server infrastructure has been decommissioned.

37.4.2 Mitel Omni Channel project has now been initiated, the scope of the initial project will begin with ICT to offer access to service desk engineers via text and WhatsApp.

37.5 Virgin Media Internet WAN Feed Upgrade

37.5.1 ICT have worked with Virgin Media to upgrade one of the Council's Internet feeds from 1GB to 3GB. This project went well with only seeing a partial outage for a few services for 30minutes during the upgrade.

37.6 Core Firewall Replacement

37.6.1 The ICT Network team successfully migrated from the existing FortiGate firewalls to new FortiGate firewalls, they offer higher throughput and additional security features.

37.6.2 Migration was performed with minimal impact to service areas and no reports of loss of connectivity from council colleagues and citizens.

37.7 Bulky Waste E-Form

37.7.1 The ICT development team worked with the Waste team and Digital to build a new bulky waste form. This was successfully delivered at the end of March 2022.

37.8 Hypervisor Platform Upgrade

37.8.1 Infrastructure went on a journey to reduce our number of hosts in the VMWare platform to Hyper-V to reduce licensing cost. This was successful however there were several limitations and management issues that Hyper-V did not have the same maturity as VMWare. We have now moved hosts and virtual machines back into an upgraded VMWare estate. We will continue to have a Hyper-V estate for specific case needs.

38. Legal

a) People Team (Childcare, SEN/Education, Adult Services)

38.1. The average duration for childcare court proceedings for the last 12 months is 49 weeks. The national target is 26 weeks however. This is a slight increase on the position this time last year, primarily due to “legacy” cases that remain from the height of the pandemic which negatively impact on the average.

38.2 CAFCASS collects data nationally showing case duration per quarter broken down by local authority. The latest release for Q of 2021-22 showed the national average for care and supervision (s31) applications duration is 45 calendar weeks.

38.3 Legal Services continue to work with Children’s Services to improve our turn round 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).

38.4 The Assistant Head of Legal Services (People Team) is currently leading on a Judicial Review challenge of the Secretary of State’s decision to require Medway to accept referrals for unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors.

38.5 The People Team continue to face severe challenges with staff retention and recruitment; the issue appears to be linked to salaries and career progression. This has led to an over reliance on locum staff and the resultant impact on budget pressures.

b) Place Team (Contracts, Planning, etc)

38.6 The recruitment and retention of staff issues are mirrored within the Place Team leading to a limitation on capacity within the team at present this is being managed with minimal impact on client teams throughout both the Council and the wider shared service but it is something that we need to look to address in the short time to prevent longer term issues arising.

- 38.7 Despite these challenges the team have continued to perform to an exceptional level, currently they are working to deliver some of the Council's high priority projects such as the acquisition of the former Debenham's building on Chatham High Street and transactions with various statutory undertakers to provide utilities to the IPM site.
- 38.8 The team continue to support the Council's companies, particularly MDC as they move forward with projects which are now being sold on the open market and lead on some of the placemaking in areas such as the Paddock via the Future High Streets projects.
- 38.9 The Council's litigators have achieved some very good results within the criminal court arena, including securing a Criminal Behaviour Order with a 5 year duration to prevent one individual engaging in waste activities as he was a prolific fly-tipper. In addition to this the team supported Planning in the successful defence of the recent Gibraltar Farm appeal and have secured permission for a Judicial review of the Secretary of State following a decision on a listed building enforcement which effectively rendered the enforcement notice toothless. "

39. Category Management/Procurement

a) Whole life benefits

- 39.1 Since inception, the Category Management team has been recording the benefits that have been delivered back to the Council. To illustrate the benefit of the approach, whole life savings over the now 9-year life of the Category Management team stands at approximately £80m.

b) Working with others

- 39.2 The skill and professionalism of the team has been recognised and evidenced by the number of external bodies engaging the Category Management team to not only undertake their procurement exercises but also to use our established Frameworks.

c) Creation of new frameworks

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

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

d) Supporting the local economy

- 39.5 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.

- 39.6 Furthermore, as the team procures during the aftermath of the UK's exit from the European Union and during the pandemic, the adoption of Social Value to drive quality plus deliver organisational aspirations increases.

e) Reducing red tape

- 39.7 The team has adopted and continues to fully utilise standardised documentation to increase the likelihood of SME participation in tender activities. Furthermore, the team engages the market on a more personal level by attending local SME focused events hosted by other bodies such as Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce.

- 39.8 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.

f) Sustainable Procurement

- 39.9 We have embedded and continue to develop internal self-servicing 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.

- 39.10 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.

g) Adapting to new ways of working

- 39.11 The tail end of 2021 and the beginning of 2022 has seen a general increase in prices in all third-party expenditure. With limited budgets and contractual expectations, officers are now looking at how services are structured to ensure they remain sustainable.

- 39.12 Whilst it would be easy to say we should focus on our local supply chains; this negates the fact that they too are often importing the same materials from abroad. To truly overcome this bottleneck, manufacturing facilities need to be located close to the buyer.

- 39.13 Even looking at the ways in which officers work, consistently collaborating with clients to ensure the needs of the service are fully met while conducting fully remote procurement has been challenging yet achievable.

h) Covid-19

- 39.14 Covid-19 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 was able to

assist with organisational deliverables in respect of Covid without it impeding performance in other areas of service delivery.

39.15 Social Value has grown to an integral element of Medway tenders. Where consideration was previously given to its inclusion, officers are now actively engaged in conversation regarding deliverables and outcomes that can be leveraged through Social Value and is even earmarked between 5% and 10% of the overall evaluation score. Social Value has been applied under what's called the Social Value Themes, Outcomes and Measures (TOMs), it's comprised of 5 key themes;

- Jobs: Promote Local Skills and Employment
- Growth: Supporting Growth of Responsible Regional Business
- Social: Healthier, Safer and more Resilient Communities
- Environment: Decarbonising and Safeguarding our World
- Innovation: Promoting Social Innovation

39.16 Whilst the adoption of Social Value is at the stage of inclusion trialling, a fully endorsed Social Value policy is to be presented to Cabinet in winter 2022 for full endorsement and incorporation.

40. Travellers

40.1 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.

40.2 The Planning Service commissioned a Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) as part of the evidence base for the new Medway Local Plan. The GTAA assesses the need for Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling show people pitches/plots in the Local Plan period. The report was published in 2018 and the results of this assessment outlined a need for 36 pitches for Gypsy and Travellers and 3 plots for Travelling Show people by 2035.

40.3 The Council has commissioned an update to the GTAA, jointly with Gravesham Borough Council, to provide an evidence base for the extended plan period beyond 2035. This work is currently in progress and the Planning Service expect the updated report by the end of August 2022.

40.4 The Planning Service will use the updated GTAA findings to inform the development of the new Local Plan. To calculate if Medway can accommodate the identified 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. 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.

40.5 All results of this work are to be adopted into the new Medway Local Plan when it is adopted.

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Appendices

None

Background documents

None