

EXECUTIVE MEMBER REPORT TO COUNCIL FEBRUARY 2017

FINANCE

1. Audit

As part of their annual plan, Internal Audit have recently reported favourably on two more internal reviews:

a) *Medium Term Financial Plan*

It was stated that 'Tees Valley Audit and Assurance Services (TVAAS) considers there to be overall, a Strong Control Environment in relation to the areas examined. Based on the audit work undertaken, an effective system of internal control is in operation and is applied consistently. As a result there are no recommendations contained in this report'; and

b) *Change Programme*

The Change Programme report also highlighted a Strong Control Environment and work is now progressing with the design of the third phase.

2. Council Tax and Adult Social Care Precept

In December 2016, Communities Secretary Sajid Javed announced that Councils will be allowed to raise 3%, instead of the 2% they had previously stipulated, in respect of the Adult Social Care precept this year and next year.

The aim of the Adult Social Care levy is to reduce the gap in funding for social care for the elderly and other vulnerable adults. It does so by passing on the burden to local council tax payers. However, analysis by the Assistant Director of Policy at the King's Fund think-tank, shows that the projected £382million raised nationally in the first year of the increased precept would not cover the £612million estimated cost of covering the national living wage for social care providers and that is without taking into account demographic and other cost pressures.

In addition, the areas of greatest need for extra funding will raise the least through the precept, due to the distribution of social housing stock in lower bands of the council tax banding system, with social care need being generally reflected by the extent of income deprivation among older people. King's Fund estimated that 'the 10 least deprived council areas this year will raise almost two-and-a-half times as much from the precept as the 10 most deprived.'

Conservative led Surrey County Council have announced that they are to hold a referendum on a 15% Council Tax rise due to the rising 'demand for adult social care,

learning disabilities and children's services'. Surrey includes the constituencies of the Chancellor, Health Secretary and Transport Secretary. Councils must hold a referendum if they want to raise Council Tax by more than 5%.

Proposals around Council Tax within the Mayor's proposed budget remain unchanged following the latest government announcement, with assumption that the precept will rise by 2% rather than 3% this year and the same 2% precept applying to the following 2 years. This is in addition to the general increase, making 3.99% each year in total.

3. Budget Consultation

In January I chaired a presentation open to all members on the budget given by the Strategic Director of Finance, Governance and Support, this followed two similar presentations in November last year. 20 members in total attended.

The Mayor also has a meeting with the business sector in on February 8th.

There has been a 6-week consultation period open for the public to pass comments or queries on information available on the website and eight responses were received.

The budget will be considered by the Executive in February and go to full Council on March 1st

4. Welfare Benefits Advice

Middlesbrough and Redcar and Cleveland councils are now offering free and confidential advice/assistance within GP surgeries relating to Welfare Benefits, Tax Credits and Tribunal representation.

They provide free comprehensive and confidential advice and assistance
There are numerous benefits to both patients and the health and social care system for providing welfare advice in healthcare settings. Other parts of the country have seen:

- 13% reduction in GP appointments
- 22% reduction in prescriptions for antidepressants
- 58% reduction in prescriptions for hypnotics and anxiolytics
- 12.7% reduction in all appointments

Surgery staff can make referrals on behalf of patients to be seen at any of the following venues, or residents can book by contacting the Welfare Rights daily advice line on 01642 729242 or email: welfarerights@middlesbrough.gov.uk

Middlesbrough GP Surgery Advice Sessions:

Parkway Surgery	Monday am
Newlands Medical Centre	Monday pm
Cleveland Health Centre	Tuesday am
Oakfield Medical Practice	Tuesday pm

Park Surgery Wednesday am

Martonside Medical Centre Thursday am
Coulby Medical Practice Thursday pm

Crossfell Health Centre Friday am

5. HR SERVICE

HR Phase 1 Payroll Implementation

The project commenced in October 2016, Phase 1 is a 'like for like' payroll implementation only. The first parallel run has taken place and parallel run 2 is currently underway. Parallel runs involve dual input into the current Payroll system (SAP) and the new system (ITrent) both systems are then reconciled. A great deal of work and effort is being put into ensuring that any identified issues are resolved in order to meet the planned go live date.

A comprehensive communication plan is in place as part of the project, clear and timely communication is vital in contributing to successful business change. A User Group represented by each Outcome Area has been established, the Group's engagement is vital to ensure that the organisation's needs are addressed as far as possible. The Group will continue to be engaged throughout the project.

Phase 2 – Manager and Employee Self-Serve

Up to this point, the majority of project effort has been concentrated on Phase 1, though preparation for Phase 2 has been concurrent. Phase 2 will likely commence in April 2017, absolute timescales are to be confirmed though the project is committed to offering the opportunity for all employees to self-serve by April 2018. Phase 2 will add value to the organisation through the introduction of the self-serve functionality.

Members of the project team have visited other sites who have previously installed self-serve. This has helped to inform how Middlesbrough approaches implementation by learning from other organisations' experiences. As a result of these site visits, the Council is now considering the opportunity to roll out access to all employees over the internet through personal devices. This would allow an additional 40% of employees to have their own Middlesbrough email account, receive corporate communications direct, access to the Intranet, Policies, Middlesbrough Learns and HR Pay Employee Self-Serve. This would make a significant positive contribution to employee engagement. A scoping exercise is being carried out to determine accessibility to IT on Council premises for those employees who may not have the use of their own personal device.

At my request, Members have already been given the opportunity to receive emails on their personal devices and seven councillors have taken up this opportunity. If there are any others who may wish to do so, please contact Heather Morren in ICT.

6. Better Health At Work Award

The North East Better Health at Work Award was launched in 2009 to recognise the efforts of workplaces in actively promoting the health of employees. Workplaces, local Primary Care Trusts and Public Health North East established the award in cooperation

with the Health and Safety Executive and the TUC. The award is now sponsored by the TUC. The North East Better Health at Work Award is the third biggest workplace health award in the UK after the Scottish and Welsh awards.

The Council has gradually progressed through the different levels of award, from achieving Bronze in 2009 to the highest accreditation which is Continuing Excellence. Assessment for accreditation is a rigorous process based on a portfolio of evidence submitted. The Council has just received notification that it has maintained Continuing Excellence. Continuing Excellence recognises the importance of organisations sustaining the progress they have made during their participation in the award and encourages them to use their experience to support others.

To achieve this level, organisations must demonstrate that they continue to raise health awareness with the workforce, through five local, regional or national health campaigns or events. At least some of these must have an element of sustainability so that they will be repeated / have made a lasting difference to the organisation or groups of staff. This year the focus was on cancer awareness, flu, physical activity, mental wellbeing, general health and wellbeing promotion, including the health bus, healthy heart checks, etc.

A Continuing Excellence organisation is expected to provide a mentoring role to at least one other organisation taking part in the award and/or continue to actively promote the award to other organisations. Middlesbrough Council will be mentoring Stockton Council this year. Middlesbrough worked closely with Hartlepool when working towards the award, sharing best practise and information on health and wellbeing activities.

There will be a formal celebration event organised by the TUC at which Middlesbrough will receive their award.

7. Managing Attendance

HR Business Partners are currently carrying out a programme of work specifically targeting managing attendance. This involves working collaboratively with other services in the Council and external organisations such as Teesside University, colleagues across the Tees Valley, as well as representatives from private sector. One of the HR Project Officers will co-ordinate these 'task and finish' internal and external working groups and lead on the review of current managing attendance policy and procedures. The programme of work will also include researching best practice, engaging with Public Health on health promotions and reviewing existing and future support mechanisms for staff.

The overall aim is to ensure:

- that managers have policies and procedures that are clear and straightforward to follow
- policies are up to date and reflect best practice
- all available resources are maximised, for example, Public Health knowledge and expertise
- staff are supported effectively
- sickness absence reduces

8. Organisational Development and Workforce Development

Manager Customer Excellence Programme: The roll out of this programme is progressing well and feedback has been extremely positive. There are two main outcomes expected from attendees:

- a) awareness of the customer charter and identification of the measures of success within each directorate in achieving the charter, and;
- b) development of a showcase for each directorate to build awareness of the great work that the Council does which will also be utilised to support engagement initiatives, such as, a corporate engagement video.

9. Employee Customer Excellence Programme

Training events are being scheduled to upskill approximately 1250 customer facing staff to ensure they have the skills, behaviours and attributes required to provide great customer service. Material is also being collated to be used for eLearning and toolkits to support the transfer of these skills to all employees.

Appraisal Upskilling: Workshops are currently underway with positive feedback being received. All Middlesbrough Managers will take part in an upskilling workshop through January and February to ensure they have the skills, knowledge and understanding to appraise their staff using the new, simplified process and competency framework.

Induction: There are a number of strands of work to support the improvement of how the Council inducts new starters. The work includes building an Induction portal which will signpost and direct new starters through the induction and on-boarding (new starter) process to ensure they are equipped and have the information they need to undertake their new roles. As well as hosting a corporate monthly induction which will be led by the Chief Executive and members of the Leadership Management Team, the team is also looking at building a framework for localised inductions.

10. GOVERNANCE

Programme Management Framework

As stated above, a recent internal audit of the Change Programme highlighted a strong control environment. Work is now progressing with the design of the third phase of the Change Programme which will cover the following themes, including the Children's Transformation Programme:

- Online Self-Serve
- Value for Money
- Return on Investment
- Growing our Economic Base
- Partnerships and Integration

11. Customer Strategy Programme

The Customer Charter has now been launched which sets out a number of standards that customers / residents can expect when dealing with a Council member of staff.

The Customer Programme marketing campaign will ensure the Charter is communicated to all staff and will be made available on the website and staff intranet.

The Customer Excellence programme has been officially launched which will ensure that all staff are equipped with the behaviours, skills and attitudes to deliver the principles of the Customer Charter.

Delivery of the new staff intranet has been split into two phases. Phase 1 saw the intranet go live on 1st February and offers an easy to use, freshly-designed intranet. Phase 2 will see many improvements

Construction work is well underway for the redesign of our Customer Centre in Middlesbrough House with work scheduled to be complete by the end of March. The temporary relocation of staff to the old register office is working well and plans are in development for the official reopening of Middlesbrough House in April 2017.

Phase 2 of the Customer Relationship Management (Firmstep) system implementation begins on 6 February and will see work continuing from the success of Phase 1.

Customer Charter

Middlesbrough Council is committed to providing excellent customer service. This Charter outlines our commitment and the standards that every customer can expect from us.

Our staff will:

- Keep you, the customer as our focus
- Support you to 'do it online'
- Only ask you once
- Keep it simple
- Aim to get it right first time
- Treat you fairly and honestly

How you can help us to help you:

- Use middlesbrough.gov.uk whenever possible
- Keep us up to date with any change in your situation
- Give us feedback and suggestions on how to improve our services
- Be honest and fair with all Council employees

To contact us go to **MyMiddlesbrough** on our website or call our Customer Centre on 01642 245 432

middlesbrough.gov.uk

Middlesbrough
moving forward

12. Council Improvement Plan (CIP)

Good progress continues to be made in delivery of the Council Improvement Plan. Another report was submitted to Corporate Affairs and Audit Committee in early

February which outlines this in detail. Executive will consider a final report in April, from this point onwards it is anticipated that almost all of the CIP actions will have been delivered. Going forward reports on individual issues within the CIP will be on an exception basis or as part of the regular cycle of reporting to members.

NICKY WALKER
EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE