

## **EXECUTIVE MEMBER REPORT TO COUNCIL Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> November 2020**

### **DECISIONS**

The following papers went to Executive on 27<sup>th</sup> October:

Members Small Scheme Allocation 2020/21

The following papers went to Executive on 24<sup>th</sup> November:

Medium Term Financial Plan and Budget Savings Proposals 2021/2022

Revenue and Capital Budget – Projected Outturn Position as at Quarter Two 2020/2021

Nunthorpe Grange Farm: Disposal – Church Lane – PART A / PART B

### **STRATEGIC**

#### **Human Resources - £95k Exit Cap**

1. The regulations to limit Public Sector Exit payments to £95,000 came in to force on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2020, this includes pension strain costs, redundancy or settlement costs. There are further reforms from MHCLG currently under consultation which potentially impact on Local Government Pension Regulations. When the outcome of the consultation is known the Pay Policy Statement will be amended accordingly and submitted to Council for approval.

### **PERFORMANCE**

#### **ICT - First Line & Service Desk**

2. ICT Service Desk Statistics October 2020
  - 2834 telephone calls this month in total (up 644 calls from the same month last year)
  - 1732 emails to the desk (by 461 from Sept 20 and up by 485 from Oct last year)
  - 1219 self-serve requests (1 down from Sept 20 and up 232 from Oct last year)
  - 206 self-serve incidents (3 down from Sept and up 44 from Oct last year)
3. Overall Demand:
  - 47% of all customer interaction via phone
  - 53% of all customer interaction by digital
4. The ICT First Line Support team continue to maintain an onsite presence, as they have since the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March, rolling out new devices to those migrating to home

working, setting up new starters and providing onsite support and guidance not possible over the phone.

5. As a direct result of the ongoing pandemic response, First Line and the Service Desk teams continue to deal with unprecedented levels of demand. Statistics show that we are dealing with, on average, 1000 additional requests for help and support, compared to the same time period, last year.

### **ICT – Infrastructure**

6. Despite the challenges of working from home the ICT Infrastructure team continue to ensure the systems that underpin our infrastructure remain fit for purpose, should a technical disaster occur. The annual test of the resilience of both the Councils ICT Data Centres is now complete. In the event of a loss of power within the Town or if one of the Data Centres goes off-line, the other will maintain all of the Councils Enterprise and key line of business applications.
7. Again, due to current demand and in order to ensure the Council continues to communicate effectively Video Conferencing licencing (WebEx) has been increased to ensure services such as Adult and Children's Social Care can work collaboratively, wherever they are.

### **Revenues and Benefits – Free School Meal Support**

8. Well done to our Revenues and Benefits Service who have managed to issue over 7000 Free School Meals Vouchers to the parents/carers of our Middlesbrough children to help out with food purchases over the half term.
9. Within 72hours of the request, the service in conjunction the Education team managed to design a solution, link in with over 50 schools, obtained lists of all our children who receive free school meals, and make payment to 7600 parents to help them feed their children over the half term. Working to unprecedented timescales, the service have provided much needed support. The Service have received an overwhelming amount of 'thanks' from parents who have been very appreciative of the much needed support.

### **Housing Benefit Performance**

10. In early 2017, the Benefit Service was being closely monitored by the DWP's performance development team due to the number of days taken to process applications. At the time, new claims were taking an average of 40 days to process with changes in a residents circumstances taking 13 days to be actioned.
11. Through a number of initiatives, performance has significantly improved and been maintained for the last 18 months. This achievement is even more remarkable given the number of initiatives introduced by Central Government over recent months to help residents as a result of Covid 19. Current performance is now showing 18 days for a new claim to be processed and 3 days for a change in circumstance to be actioned. This level of performance has recently been recognised by DWP who have confirmed that both areas of performance are well within national expectations.

## **Self-Isolation Payments**

12. In addition to the above, our Revenues and Benefits Service have been supporting the NHS Self Isolation Programme. The service has currently paid £52,000 to 104 residents as at 8 November 2020. These payments have provided much needed financial support in their time of need, allowing residents to self isolate and fulfil legal requirements. The team's involvement in providing both residents and businesses with financial support over Covid has been enormous. It is so pleasing to see that despite all the additional work they still continue to deliver improvements in benefit processing times.

## **INVOLVEMENT AND PROMOTION**

### **ICT – Applications Team**

13. The ICT Social Care Support team continues to focus on developing and implementing the changes identified as part of the overall improvement plan for Children's Services. An in-house solution has been developed and approved recently which will enable the recording of allegations against professionals that are being investigated by the local authority designated officer (LADO). This solution has saved the service £16k this year and a further £2k annually against the purchase of the Liquid Logic - Legal Workspace module.

14. In response to the continued pressures placed on Directorates, to deliver not only business as usual activity but new solutions, the applications team have developed a number of new solutions using the Council's Firmstep product. The following solutions are now live:

- A new Household Waste Booking system which replaces the off-the-shelf Reservio product
- An online form for requesting the collection of mattresses
- An online form for processing Self Isolation Payments for Covid.
- A new Covid questionnaire process for internal use to help to Track and Trace positive cases. This solution has been shared with Redcar
- A new form for requesting Free School Meals support during the holiday period

15. The ArcGis open data site for the Council went live in the last few weeks. Some examples of the data provided to the public on this site are spatial data relating to care homes, land ownership, schools and ward boundaries and non-spatial data relating to school term dates, financial spending over £500 and election results. The sharing of key performance data with the public fosters trust, credibility, accountability as well as reducing the effort to respond to repeated queries for the same information.

16. The ArcGis solution has also been used to create a COVID-19 web application for Middlesbrough and Redcar. The solution processes the public health data, showing where the positive cases are within the authorities. This is for internal COVID-19 planning use but the aim is to develop an external version (without the personal data) in the future.

### **ICT - Community Safety Data Recording System – CDPSoft**

17. CDPSoft is a new case management system that effectively manages victims, perpetrators and locations involved in crime and antisocial behaviour. This system is due to go live in April 2021 and work is ongoing to enable implementation by this date. Middlesbrough's Community Safety Team currently uses Flare as a case management system; the Flare system has been in place since 2003. When Flare was acquired Community Safety was under the same umbrella as Public Protections/ Environment and it was beneficial to use the same system.
18. The team is now more closely aligned to Youth Offending Service, Early Help and Troubled Families, and works with the same individuals. CDP will be utilised by Middlesbrough council and our partner agencies (Police, Cleveland Fire Brigade, Probation Service etc.) CDPSoft allows us to better extract data, we can deploy our own and partner resources more effectively which will support us to reduce crime and ASB, in accordance with our statutory duty and support the Mayors '2025 vision' to create safer communities and further reduce the impact of crime and ASB.

### **Commissioning & Procurement – Care Homes**

19. The service has facilitated payments to both the Care home sector and community care providers this month for Infection, prevention and Control. The Government provided £1,929,898 for Infection, Prevention and control measures, of which £1,156,937 has been allocated to care homes and £414,960 to community care providers with registered offices in Middlesbrough. The remaining 20% will be allocated at the local authorities discretion targeted at infection prevention measures at wider areas of care. The payments have to be paid in two instalments, the first at the end of October, the second in December. The condition attached to this funding include measures concerning isolating residents safely, restricting staff movement between providers and payment of staff full wages whilst self isolating. These grants will be monitored to ensure grant conditions are met.

### **Commissioning & Procurement - PPE**

20. The service has this month introduced the Government requirement for the local authority to provide free PPE to all schools, registered childcare setting and further education. Processes have been established with these settings to enable them to place orders directly through to our PPE warehouse to ensure Middlesbrough Council accords with the government instructions. The warehouse receives a monthly delivery direct from the Government and ensures that this is available for all education settings.

### **Human Resources – Face to face Counselling Support during Covid-19**

21. To supplement the Employee Assistance Programme we already have in place we have introduced Face to Face counselling (via video link) to run from November 2020 through to March 2021. This will be for employees who are struggling to cope and the telephone counselling service is not meeting their needs.