

Council

8 December 2011

Report of the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services

Corporate Services – Progress Update

Summary

1. As Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, I am pleased to present an update on progress within my portfolio. As the electorate has chosen to change the administration – I would like to take this opportunity to reflect on the words from my Lib Dem predecessor for Corporate Services – ‘The future looks challenging for all’. (Ref council report October 2011.)
2. How true these words are. Residents, businesses and public servants in York are all facing a wide range of complex challenges. The national financial climate is affecting all sectors of the economy. The effect of central government cuts to Local Authorities is beginning to bite. We are also seeing an ideological and unfair shift in the welfare state that presents a threat to the most vulnerable in our society.
3. Against this backdrop, it has been critical that I, as the new Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, hit the ground running representing York’s electorate and ensuring delivery of their priorities. My portfolio is critical for setting the foundations for success across the Council. Since May, I have been working with officers to shape the strategic objectives of the organisation; encapsulated in the Council Plan. I have also been working to build strong foundations across HR, Finance, Procurement and other support services to ensure that front line staff are properly supported both now and in the future.
4. There is much more that could have been added to this report and I am grateful for the work officers have done. In future updates I hope to highlight other work areas within my portfolio.

Key Achievements

- 2012/13 and 2013/14 Budget Strategy set;
- Robust programme to achieve £21m of savings in 2011/12;
- On track to deliver Capital Programme schemes totalling £72m in 2011/12;
- Council Plan; four year objectives for CYC;
- City Plan; four year partnership objectives for York;
- Successful NESTA Bid;
- New Media Protocol;
- Improved branding;
- More Social Media;
- Creation of the Local Authority Trading Company;
- Increase in Council Tax collection by £200k;
- New Report it/Do it On Line services;
- Free Public WiFi;
- Procurement Strategy;
- West Offices build on track and to budget
- Trade Unions agreed to management proposals on terms and conditions.

Portfolio Summaries

5. This section sets out the progress being made across key services and functions:

Portfolio Part One - Financial Services

Budget Preparation

6. Work continues on the development of the financial strategy that will be presented to Council in February. Regular update meetings have taken place between Officers and Members to enable information to be shared on budget options, and ultimately ensure that difficult decisions are taken in the full knowledge of the risks/pressures inherent in each area of activity.
7. In December and January an extensive programme of budget consultation will take place with stakeholders. Members will be holding meetings with the general public, the business community and representatives from the Voluntary Sector to ensure as many

individuals and groups have the opportunity to contribute to the debate on the Council's budget and priorities.

8. Again, an on-line consultation tool will be available to allow individuals to propose their own strategies to balance the Council's budget. Feedback from all these various consultation streams will be fed back to Cabinet and complement the findings of the Fairness Commission.

Budget Monitoring

9. Members will be aware that the current year's budget was set against a background of £21m of savings – the most challenging programme of financial reductions for a generation.
10. Latest monitoring has identified that significant progress has been made towards the achievement of financial targets. There are some areas of challenge, but robust mitigation strategies are being developed to ensure that the Council operates within budget.
11. The Capital programme continues to be monitored closely and is on track to deliver a wide range of schemes across the city totalling £72m.

Financial Reporting

12. The 2010/11 Statement of Accounts received an unqualified opinion from the Audit Commission.

Internal Audit/Fraud/Information Governance

13. The Council's shared service with NYCC for Internal Audit (Veritau Ltd) continues to operate extremely successfully. It is hoped that very shortly Veritau will extend its operation through the provision of internal audit work to a group of North Yorkshire District Councils (known as the North Yorkshire Audit Partnership) via a subsidiary company to be known as Veritau – North Yorkshire Limited (VNY).
14. So far this year (to 31 October) the team has received and tracked 479 Freedom of Information requests have been received and tracked, which is an increase from 378 in the same period last year (a 27% increase).

Portfolio Part Two -Policy Team

15. Since May, the Policy Team has concentrated on three key objectives

- Developing a four year vision for the Council's priorities; The Council Plan;
- Developing proposals for a more focused work programme for the WOW Partnership; The City Plan;
- Developing a strategic policy function, shaping the Council's response to emerging Welfare, Health and Community legislation.

Council Plan

16. In October, Council approved the Council Plan. This document set out the priorities for City of York Council over the next four years. It reflected the commitments made by the Cabinet in their election manifesto set alongside wider Council objectives. The Council Plan also identified the core capabilities that were required of individuals and teams in order to deliver the plan. These capabilities will be developed in part through the Workforce Development Strategy.

City Plan

17. The WOW Partnership has a 25 year vision now known as the Strategy for York. Since May, the Policy Team has been working with the partnership to prioritise the work programme that supports this strategy. This is so that reduced public sector resources can be targeted at the most critical and important activities. The prioritised work programme, focused on the city economy, environment and communities is known as the City Plan and was agreed at the WOW Board in October. Work on the appropriate governance structures continues.

Innovation

18. The Policy Team developed CYC's bid for Nesta funding. Nesta is a Government supported organisation tasked with developing more innovative ways of delivering Council services. CYC teamed up with Science City York to develop a bid based on a technique known as 'open innovation'. In simple terms this means opening up problem solving to interested parties in the city and beyond on the basis of incentives. Over 160 applications were received and CYC is one of just 17 to be successful. The Policy Team is working with Nesta to try and secure CYC a position in the top 5 Councils which would mean that funding would be provided to roll out the model nationally.

Portfolio Part Three - Communications Team

19. The communications team has concentrated on three key objectives since May.
- Establishment of a new Media Protocol;
 - Better coordination of Project Communications;
 - Improved standardisation and branding.

Media Protocol

20. The Communications Team worked with Cabinet to establish a new media protocol which would make Leader and Cabinet decision making, more transparent to residents.

Project Coordination

21. The Communications Team has been working with 27 projects to develop more effective communication plans and strategies. This is to ensure that residents and businesses are receiving the information they need about changes in the city and new services that may be available.

Improved Standardisation and Branding

22. Since May, the Communications Team has improved the accessibility of the Council's website. It has also standardised the font size on external communications in direct response to requests from groups representing older people and those with disabilities. Standard out of office messages and email signatures have been introduced to improve customer services. Further work will be done to standardise font types.

Social Media

23. The Council's Facebook and Twitter sites go from strength to strength. Since May over 2500 followers have been added to the Twitter site and the number of customers using the CYC Facebook site continues to grow. Further sites will be rolled out across wards and more emphasis will be placed on Social Media as a way to communicate with younger people in particular.

Portfolio Part Four – Local Authority Trading Company

24. CBSS are leading on the development of the new local authority trading company – City of York Trading (CYT) which is being developed with a view to starting to trade some of our services in a professional and effective manner.

25. The Cabinet approved the creation of the company in September and it has now formally been created. The company has attracted significant interest across many areas of the Council, who are considering how they can utilise the opportunities the company brings including delivering savings for the Council and creating exciting new service delivery.

Portfolio Part Five – Legal Services

26. The legal team are providing legal support and advice right across the council. This includes advising and supporting Directorates with significant amounts of new legislation and helping with their responses. Examples include the transfer of public health responsibilities, arrangements for Police Commissioners and Police and Crime Panels and the Localism Act including, of course, significant changes to the Standards Regime.
27. There are particular challenges for the social care lawyers who are dealing with high numbers of care proceedings as well as increasing demands for support on adult social care matters. Demands for legal support on procurement matters have also increased and this looks set to be an area where demand will only increase further as the Council looks to alternative methods of service delivery.

Portfolio Part Six – Transactional Services

28. During 2011 year has seen the consolidation of income and transactional services across the council. The further key objectives for 2011/12 are:
- A further increase in Council Tax income collection of £200K
 - Implementation of Adults Charging Policy
 - Implementation of prepaid cards
 - Increase take up of Direct Debit in Council Tax
 - Increased Advertising income
 - Reduce Insurance costs by £80K
 - Bankruptcy action
 - Pod Casts for City Walls
 - The performance of Creditors in processing all invoices within 28 days remains at approximately 96%.

- In order to continue to develop strong financial management across the Council, an updated version of the Council's Financial Regulations was issued in October.

Portfolio Part Seven - ICT

Do it/report it online

29. ICT designed and developed the Customer Self Service Do it/Report it on line portal that allows Customers to report and track the progress of their case online or check their information on line such as their Council Tax bill. This has both increased and improved the number of services currently available online without having to visit, call or email the council.
30. Further phased projects to expand the range of services that can be accessed through this portal are scheduled for 2011/2012 & 2012/2013 and the next phase scheduled for the Winter of 2011 include further Council Tax Services, Car Parking and Registrar Services.

Improved Customer internet access through public wi-fi at Branch Libraries, Energise and as part of the Coney Street and St Helens Square Trial

31. Access to the internet through public wi-fi has also been made available from York Energise towards the West of our City. In addition free public Wi-Fi has been provided within Coney Street and St Helens Square as part of the City Centre trial.

Multi Functional Devices (MFD's)

32. The roll out of Multi Functional Devices (MFD's) continues and with a significant reduction in paper usage alongside the flexibility it provides users.

Mobile phones/Devices

33. ICT have secured a more flexible and cost effective mobile phone contract for users of mobile phones and devices. This will support more flexible working styles.

Improving residential and commercial broad band services

34. York is included within the North Yorkshire broad band bid that has recently secured £17.8 from Government. ICT are working with North Yorkshire County Council and BDUK to clarify how the

funding can be drawn down to extend broad band coverage in rural parts of the city.

Portfolio Part Eight - Procurement

35. Work within procurement is now moving at a pace towards achieving the objectives of reduced cost whilst at the same time being socially responsible and contributing to the Council's sustainability targets.
36. The draft strategy is currently under review and will be presented to Cabinet in January 2012.

New supplier contract management and tendering system

37. The new system will be live by January 2012. Work has been done to bring together information from Financial Management System (FMS) and the existing contract management system (SCMS) to ensure that the Council captures supplier information. This will provide better analysis of spend and the patterns of spending.

Procurement Activity Plan (PAP)

38. The Commercial Procurement Managers are working with each directorate to agree the priorities for next year and agree a 12-18 month work plan. This will enable much better management of procurement activity.

Portfolio Part Nine – Property Services

39. A significant amount has been done by officers in my area and therefore I wish to acknowledge that work here.

West Offices

40. The construction work began in January 2011. The project is running to time and within budget. The building is on schedule to be handed over to the council at the end of September 2012. Then there will follow a two month period where the council will install the IT servers, the furniture and storage, equip the hub areas and business cafe, equip the meeting rooms and prove all the building systems.
41. The staff moves are scheduled to occur over the period December 2012 through February 2013.
42. The detailed space planning is now taking place until early March 2012. Plans are being worked up with all service areas and staff.

Comments received back will be fed into the next stage of the space planning process.

Procurement for the new HQ

43. Procurement activity relating to the new accommodation is under way and will continue throughout the project. Examples include furniture, removals, clearances and catering.

Portfolio Part Ten – HR & Customer Services

Terms & Conditions Review

- Terms and conditions negotiations with Trade Unions have concluded and Trade Unions agreed to management's proposals on terms and conditions.
- Work continues on the finalisation of flexible and smart working policies for discussion and agreement with unions ahead of planning for the office moves and implementation of the different workstyles.

I-trent progress

44. Phase 1 of the implementation of the council's new HR system is drawing to a close. The final pay from Delphi will be November 2011, with the first pay from I-trent in December 2011.

Workforce Strategy and Customer Strategy

45. These are being developed to meet the delivery of the core competencies in the Council Plan to underpin the delivery of our priorities. We are evolving our Customer Strategy with a full focus on customer need and the development of a full range of methods to access our services to meet those needs, we will also develop clear and consistent customer care skills, standards and behaviours.
46. Those skills and behaviours will also feature within a comprehensive approach to skills, competencies and behaviours development for our 21st century workforce. This approach will be enshrined in the Workforce Strategy.
47. Both of these important documents will be presented to Cabinet in the New Year and the action plans are being finalised now, with

timescales and senior level monitoring arrangements to ensure their effective delivery.

Customer Service Highlights

48. Headlines in terms of achievements against customer service targets for October 2011 include:

- 12,000 calls handled in October, including over 2000 in Benefits
- 5000 visitors to reception areas
- 63% increase in council tax call volumes, reasons are being explored and underlying causes being identified/addressed
- Winter maintenance rota in place from end October until end February.
- Tightened procedures and cover for Hate/Crime reporting.
- Average year to date Benefits processing is 16 days;
- Recruiting to a number of vacancies including 2 apprentices.
- Developing further CMetrix customer satisfaction reporting and feedback to all service areas.
- Proactive promotion to increase uptake of customer use of CMetrix tool in face to face areas.
- Up-skilling of face to face team in email handling, council tax and housing processes continues.
- Work continues to bring Blue Badge applications into F2F.
- Consultation is underway with residents, staff and equalities groups around a range of proposals to improve the facilities to access housing and benefits in Acomb and across the city as a whole. Options include mixed use of a bus which will also provide library services in all areas of the city in addition to services provided on different days in a range of council owned facilities across Acomb. Other forms of access will also be explored.
- Work continues on the design of the Customer Centre in West Offices, including space planning for staff and customer numbers/flow.
- The core of the central Feedback team has been established in the York Customer Centre to start to establish systems to

manage all complaints, feedback and Freedom of Information requests.

Apprentices

49. The Council has played a significant role in the 100 in 100 campaign to increase the number of apprentices working in the City's public and private sector. In total, over 200 apprenticeships have been offered in York. CYC publicised 36 apprenticeships, 2 had previously been recruited to in the workforce development unit of ACE and 34 were left to fill through the corporate scheme. To date we have recruited 25 apprentices and have 9 business admin vacancies remaining.

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Cabinet Member for Corporate Services