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CORPORATE GOVERNANCE SERVICE

PROGRESS REPORT - 16 December 2009 – 10 February 2010

OFFICE OF THE CITY CHAMBERLAIN

- Accounting teams are supporting services in budget process for 2010/11.
- The Finance Development team are providing support to education establishments for BOSS replacement. They are also continuing to develop on-line learning modules for the Council's financial ledger package (E-Financials).
- Work continues with the automated processing for bank reconciliations with work completed for the Debtors bank account. Automated processing is being taken forward for all other income and payment accounts the work for which includes system configuration and testing and staff training. Project plans reflect completion of the automated process by end of March 2010.
- On the whole the scanning and processing of supplier invoices, with the planned processing for all sports centres, through new technology (Infosmart) has gone well. A report submitted to the January meeting of the Finance and Resources Committee seeking approval to set up a centralised Finance Processing and Payments team was approved and the next stages progressed
- The Payroll team are completing work in conjunction with HR and services to transfer weekly paid staff to monthly pay with the majority of staff having now been successfully transferred.
- Preparatory work is being undertaken, supported by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) and Pricewaterhouse Coopers (PwC) for the implementation of International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) which will significantly impact on the information presented in the Council's financial statement for 2010/11.

HUMAN RESOURCES

- The next in our occasional series of 'Hot Topic' seminars took place on 20 January. David Carry, Olympian and Commonwealth Gold Medallist, delivered an interactive session entitled 'Granite City Grit - Motivation And Self Belief'. The session focused on how the principles that have helped him succeed in sport can be applied to business and how the values which have been instilled in him as an Aberdonian have shaped his success.
- A comprehensive programme is being established to assist those who are being supported for voluntary service/ early retirement as well as those who may be at risk of redundancy. The programme will include areas such as financial planning and pre-retirement as well as a job shop. First sessions have taken place.

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

- Committee Officers and the printing team continue to work with colleagues in HR to support the Appointment Panel during the appointment of the new Heads of Service.
- Team members have contributed issues for consideration to the six month review of committee structures to be reported to Council on 10th February

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CITY SOLICITOR

Court Team

- The Team has contributed with education colleagues to the Scottish Government consultation exercise on secondary legislation to the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2009. This legislation is to be enacted later this year and will impose further duties on Education Authorities in meeting needs of children who face barriers to learning.
- Considerable progress achieved in conjoined working with Aberdeenshire and Moray Councils on recruiting and retaining Curators ad Litem and Reporting Officers. This serves to fulfill statutory responsibilities to Courts and to meet the needs of children and families across a broad geographical area whilst keeping costs to SW budget at manageable levels.
- Continued significant work providing TUPE advice for the outsourcing of services in line with budgetary and service requirements and in connection with high value/high profile procurements.

Conveyancing Team

- In December the Conveyancing Team brought in a capital receipt of £1.1 million following completion of the sale by the Council of commercial premises in Belmont Street.

Policy & Advice Team

- State Aid
A State Aid Policy (SAP) incorporating compliance procedure has been prepared by the Policy & Advice Team and is about to be referred to CMT prior to being submitted to Committee for approval and adoption across the Council. The SAP gives a synopsis of the law surrounding state aid and provides a procedure and checklist for Services to adhere to. It also incorporates standard letters to be sent out by Services where state aid is to be awarded following a Committee decision.
- Freedom of Information

The Policy & Advice Team is working closely with Archives in order to prepare for an inspection of how the Council deals with Freedom of Information. The inspection will be carried out by the Office of the Scottish Information Commissioner later in February and preparation has included the completion of a detailed questionnaire.

- Procurements/ Standing Orders

Following approval of new Standing Orders for Contracts and Procurements, detailed training has been developed by the Policy & Advice Team and will be rolled out to Services in advance of the implementation date for the new Standing Orders which is 1st April 2010. Work is also on-going to update the Council's template procurement documentation.

The Policy & Advice Team continues to provide significant legal input into a number of important corporate procurements and contracts, including the

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Grounds Maintenance market testing, Communal Cleaning/Security at Multi Storey Blocks, and Phase 1 of the Council House New build project.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

- The summarised version of the Council's annual public performance report will be issued with residents' Council Tax Bills early in 2010.
- Following extensive consultation with staff and elected members, the Council agreed an Interim Business Plan for the period 2010 – 2013 at their meeting in December 2009.
- The Audit and Risk Committee have agreed that Officers pursue an outsourcing for our internal audit service and work is ongoing.

SERVICE DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT

- The EU Services Directive aims to break down barriers to cross border trade in services between countries in the EU. Of the 40 licence pages on the council website which required to be updated, 38 have been completed. This places Aberdeen City Council as one of the leading councils in completing this work.
- Here is an example showing the breadth of the information now provided: http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/AnimalWelfare/anw/anw_animal_boarding.asp
- Work continues to address the demands for the commissioning of ICT in the 3Rs schools. The snagging lists at Cults Academy and Bucksburn Campus are significantly reduced. Initial orders have been placed for the next wave of 3Rs primary schools due for opening between mid February - April (Mile End, Hazlehead and Braehead).
- The ICT Security team has implemented a penetration testing application on a rolling programme. This will test, highlight and initiate changes to correct any weaknesses in our network security for business critical applications. This does not replace the existing policy of testing all new web based applications by external certified security professionals prior to live implementation but supplements with more regular testing at a reduced cost.
- The review of Policies & Procedures has all returns from the pilot directorate received and collated. From this a proposal for a Council wide implementation of Policy review is being considered.
- A report seeking approval to move to a managed data centre is awaiting committee approval. This will secure for the council an effective and efficient way to deliver a core facility for all day to day operations of the Council.

CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT (CRM)

- Tender exercise has commenced for the building works for the Customer Contact Centre at Frederick Street. Preparatory work for a tender exercise for the ICT Hardware and Software for the Contact Centre is continuing.
- The integration of the out of hours Housing Repairs Service and the Regional Communication Centre is underway and due to go live at the beginning of February.

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- Work is continuing on the review of the Business Case for the Shared Revenues and Benefit Service Project.
- Essential preparatory work is underway for the annual exercise of issuing new Rent charges, new Council Tax bills, Benefit Award Notifications and Business Rates Bills.

CENTRAL PROCUREMENT UNIT

- The CPU is working with the Education Service to roll out the corporate purchase ordering system, PECOS to replace the existing BOSS system which is no longer fit for purpose and expensive to support. As well as migrating to PECOS the schools will also move onto the Infosmart system to enable the removal of invoice processing and all budget monitoring will be undertaken using the Council's corporate financial management system and budget reporting tool (Collaborative Planning). A rolling programme is now in place to implement these changes in all schools by the end of March 2010.
- The CPU was subject to a national procurement capability assessment in October last year. The assessment was measuring performance in relation to the 82 key recommendations of the McLelland Review of Public Procurement in Scotland. Aberdeen City Council was joint second (shared service with Aberdeenshire Council) overall out of the 32 Scottish Local Authorities assessed behind Glasgow City Council.

COMMUNITY PLANNING & REGENERATION

- Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessments (EHRIAs) on all budgetary savings proposals were presented to elected members as part of the budgetary process.
- Local interactive workshops - "Who holds the Purse Strings ?", delivered by Engender, the national organisation which champions gender equality, raised awareness of gender budgeting amongst officers and community activists.
- Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeen Women's Alliance contributed to the Engender paper on Beijing plus 15 to the UN Commission on the status of women.
- A successful commemorative event was held in the Cowdray Hall to mark Holocaust Memorial Day on the 27th January 2010. Held on the 65th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp, Holocaust Memorial Day challenges everyone across the UK to become part of a 'Legacy of Hope'.
- The Housing & Environment Committee, on 20 Jan 2010, selected the preferred bidder to deliver the first phase of the new build council house programme. Work is also being progressed to deliver the second phase of an additional 42 council houses mainly on the Marchburn School site.