

## MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

<b>From: Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Organisational Delivery</b>	<b>Report Number: CMU31</b>
<b>To: Council</b>	<b>Date of meeting: 25 October 2018</b>

### TO PROVIDE AN UPDATE FROM THE LAW AND GOVERNANCE DIRECTORATE

#### 1. Overview of Directorate

- 1.1 The Law and Governance group comprises Audit and Risk Management, Democratic Services, Information Management and the Shared Legal Services. The Assistant Director is also the Councils' Monitoring Officer and the section therefore plays a critical role in supporting the work of the MO.
- 1.2 The Law and Governance teams are predominantly support services and contribute to the delivery of the Joint Strategic Plan by providing professional support and advice to all other service areas. The team has an essential role in maintaining and promoting good governance throughout the organisation.

#### 2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Cabinet Members' report for Law and Governance be noted.

#### 3. Key Activities/Issues Over the Past Three Months

##### 3.1 Annual Canvass of Electors

Beginning in July every year, the Electoral Registration Officer (the Chief Executive) is required by law to send up to three household enquiry forms to every residential property in the district. The purpose of this form is to collect details of residents who need to be included on the register of electors. A revised register is then published annually on 1 December.

The third stage of the canvass is now underway, which involves a personal visit by one of the canvassers to any properties where there has been no response to the first two forms. To date 86.99%<sup>1</sup> of households have responded to the canvass which is an excellent result for this stage in the process.

Invitation to register forms are being sent out in weekly batches to new electors who have been identified on the household forms.

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<sup>1</sup> As at 1 October 2018.

### 3.2 Electoral Review of Ward Boundaries

The Order amending the district ward boundaries will be laid in Parliament on 22 October 2018, which is later than expected due to delays in the Government Legal Department. This will be made into legislation after 40 sitting days. The new wards are effective from the election on 2 May 2019, therefore the Electoral Services Team will be publishing a revised register on the new boundaries ahead of the nominations window for those elections.

### 3.3 Review of UK Parliamentary Constituency Boundaries

The final recommendations of the Boundary Commission for England were published on 10 September 2018 and must now go through the process of parliamentary approval. The revised constituencies will be effective from the next scheduled UK Parliamentary Election in May 2022.

The Mid Suffolk district is currently split between the Central Suffolk and North Ipswich Constituency and the Bury St Edmunds Constituency. Minor changes are recommended to both of these constituencies to achieve better electoral equality.

### 3.4 Internal Audit Services to the Holding Companies

The Internal Audit Team has been awarded the contract for providing the internal audit provision for Babergh DC Holding Company and Mid Suffolk Holding Company. This represents 20 days of paid audit work.

The types of audit will include:

- Compliance Audit – To provide assurance on compliance with rules, regulations and laws applicable to the operating environment.
- Operational Audit – To provide assurance on efficient and effective conduct of operations within the operating environment.
- Information System Audit – To provide assurance on the proper functioning and use of the information system through the life cycle of those activities operated within.
- Performance Audit – To provide assurance on the efficient use of resources to obtain the objectives of the companies.
- Environmental Audits – To provide assurance on compliance with any associated environmental laws and regulations.
- Special Audits – Relating to any investigations on fraud and corruption, or any other service area with the prior approval of the Board.

### 3.5 Improvements to Freedom of Information response times

The Information Management Team is taking proactive steps to improve response times to requests for information made under the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act and to ensure that all requests are responded to within the statutory deadline of 20 working days. These steps include implementing an escalation process for outstanding requests and providing weekly metrics on the number of requests received and answered. There will also be a refresh of the FOI training package for officers and Councillors in the coming months.

## 4. **Future Key Activities**

### 4.1 Publication of the 2018 Register of Electors

The 2018 Register of Electors will be published on Saturday 1 December 2018, in accordance with statutory requirements. This will be using the existing ward boundaries. Registers will be distributed to those individuals and organisations entitled to receive a copy during the following week.

Due to the ward boundary changes the electoral register will be republished using the new boundaries on 1 February 2019.

### 4.2 Polling District Review

The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 requires a review of polling districts to be undertaken in the 16 months following 1 October 2018. Furthermore, the changes to the ward boundaries have resulted in some necessary amendments to polling districts. The review will therefore be undertaken ahead of the republication of the register on 1 February 2019.

The designation of polling districts is a Council function and a report to gain Full Council's approval will be presented in December. The allocation of the actual polling stations within each polling district is for the Returning Officer to determine.

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