

MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL CABINET MEMBER UPDATE

From: Councillor Suzie Morley Leader of the Council	Report Number: CMU11
To: Council	Date of meeting: 23 January 2020

TO PROVIDE AN UPDATE ON THE LAW AND GOVERNANCE PORTFOLIO

1. Overview of Portfolio

- 1.1 The Law & Governance group comprises Audit & 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 & Governance teams are predominantly support services and contribute to the delivery of the Corporate Plan by providing professional support and advice to all other service areas. The teams have an essential role in maintaining and promoting good governance throughout the organisation.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That Council notes the report.

3. Key Activities/Issues Over the Past Three Months

3.1 Elections

Over the last 3 months all electoral resources have been focused on the delivery of the UK Parliamentary Election (UKPGE). The elections were successfully delivered in partnership with counterparts from East and West Suffolk.

3.2 Annual Canvass and Publication of the Register of Electors

The revised register was published on the 1st December 2019. The canvass return was lower than previously due to resources being diverted to the delivery of the UKPGE. Nonetheless, as a result of increased registration prior to the UKPGE the register is assessed to be more accurate than following a normal annual canvass. The performance measure will need to be reviewed following the implementation of the Canvass Reform during the 2020 canvass.

Neighbourhood Planning Referenda (NPR) and Elections planning

Alongside preparation for the UKPGE Electoral services delivered multiple NPRs during November and December. Planning and preparation has already commenced for the planned Police and Crime Commissioner elections on Thursday 7th May 2020.

4. Audit and Governance

4.1 As the Councils' Delivery Programme continued to reshape and transform services, Internal Audit has provided assurance, support and guidance on a diverse range of activities, including ensuring that key controls continue to be maintained during the management review. In line with the Councils' Internal Audit Charter the work was conducted to ensure that it delivers against the PSIAS and the requirement to produce an annual Head of Internal Audit opinion. In doing this it can be confirmed that the work conducted covered the following activities:

- Governance processes
- Monitoring
- Ethics
- Information and Information technology governance
- Risk Management
- Fraud management

4.2 As a result of a retirement, and also a successful internal job application for career development reasons by another member of the Internal Audit Team, at the time of writing this report resources are temporarily reduced. Following a recent unsuccessful external recruitment campaign, the Corporate Manager for Internal Audit is considering a number of options with senior management. Other Authorities have experienced similar recruitment challenges in this area of work. Work is being prioritised on a risk-led basis to ensure that coverage and the consequent annual audit opinion are not compromised.

5. Monitoring Office

5.1 The Monitoring Officer is a statutory appointment pursuant to section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

5.2 The Joint Audit Standards Committee is responsible for ensuring that District and Town/Parish Councillors in B&MSDCs are aware of the standards of conduct expected of them and that they observe those standards. To this effect, the Deputy Monitoring Officers have recently been involved in providing a number of training sessions at Parish and Town Council level on the Code of Conduct to raise awareness and remind Councillors of their responsibilities. Feedback has been very positive and, where appropriate, this will continue.

6. Legal Services

6.1 The Legal Service Partnership has recently participated in a Gateway Review designed to focus on the establishment, operations and the future of the service. This was with a view to providing key learning that can be used in the implementation of other similar local authority shared services' arrangements, together with recommendations for the local shared service as part of its continued development.

7. Governance and Civic Office

7.1 National Democracy Week ran from the 14th October 2019 until the 18th October 2019 and activities were held across both councils. Schools were invited to take part in a webinar with councillors and officers.

Thurston school accepted the invitation and submitted questions for councillors and officers to answer, which covered a wide range of key issues. The event was streamed live. Councillors, the Governance Team and Waste Services engaged with residents during National Democracy Week by setting up market stalls in Stowmarket and Sudbury town centres.

- 7.2 **Paperless Committee Meetings** – Twenty- three councillors across both councils have registered their devices to receive full sets of committee papers. Members wishing to register their devices should contact the Member Support Officer mandy.smith@babberghmidsuffolk to arrange a 1-2-1. Members that have not registered will not be able to access the confidential papers at committee.
- 7.3 **Civic Office** - the Chair of Mid Suffolk held a charity hog roast in August 2019. The event was well supported and over £600 was raised for the Chair's chosen charity.

The Chair's Civic Service was held on the 8th December 2019 at Fressingfield with over 75 people in attendance.