

Enabled and Efficient Organisation Portfolio Report

1. Financially Sustainable Councils

Members will not need reminding that the 2017/18 Budget and our Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) was agreed at February's Council meeting with a modest increase in council tax and no significant change to service levels for our residents. However this is an opportune time to acknowledge all the hard work and effort put in by the Finance Team. The budget process was started earlier and a zero-based approach was adopted. By challenging managers and focusing on strategic and service needs a robust budget and MTFS was delivered. With finalisation of the budget the focus for the team shifts to the year-end close, outturn reporting, production of the Statement of Accounts and audit to a tighter timetable than previous years.

2. Outcome Focused Performance Management

Officers are currently working on the next outcome focused performance report and will be included in our next portfolio holder report to Council. A lot of work has also been undertaken on how we manage and monitor our projects through our intranet (Connect) that are contributing towards the achievement of the Joint Strategic Plan. A preview has been seen at the Enabled and Efficient Organisation Portfolio Holder briefing on 14 March and some training will be rolled out to all councillors in the near future.

3. Strengthened and Clear Governance to Enable Delivery

(a) Further Electoral Review

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England has made no amendments to the draft council size submission which was agreed by Council in February. Therefore the final version will be submitted, unchanged, by the deadline of 17 March. Councillors will be notified when the first attempt at redrawing the boundaries is made available by the LGBCE for consultation.

(b) Leader-Cabinet

The constitution amendments will be considered by the Strengthening Governance Task & Finish group on 30 March 2017, and brought to Council in April for approval. The scope of the amendments will be limited to the sections of the constitution dealing with council procedure rules, committee terms of reference and the officer scheme of delegations. There will also be some consequential changes to the financial regulations and the contract standing orders.

Alongside side these constitutional amendments, officers are working on a training and support package for councillors and staff members to assist with the change to leader-cabinet. This will include technical training around the key decision process, the scrutiny function and report writing and a cultural change support piece of work.

(c) Modern.gov

Phase 1 of the modern.gov implementation is complete and all committee papers and minutes are being prepared and published using the system. Public papers are available on our website and via the mobile app for councillors, officers and members of the public. Councillors and officers can also access restricted papers via the intranet and the app, although there are some issues to resolve with accessing the restricted papers using the app for councillors who are not members of the particular committee. The advantage of using the app rather than access through the intranet is that the app has an annotation facility. Phase 1 has delivered some real efficiencies in terms of the preparation of papers and has improved the numbering and indexing of the agendas, however there are several learning points from this phase of the project, which will be used to support the delivery of phase 2.

Phase 2 relates to the implementation of report workflows. This means that the writing and authorisation of the reports will all be done within the system – allowing better version control and using automated reminders to the report author, the authorising officers and committee services. This phase is scheduled to go live in September 2017 to allow sufficient time for the workflows to be written and for officers to receive training.

4. More Efficient Public Access Arrangements

There are two major parts of the Public Access strategy that will go live in March. The new joint website will be launched on 20 March and will be accessible directly from both www.midsuffolk.gov.uk and www.babergh.gov.uk. This represents a major step forward for the councils to have a website that is accessible from any device and will give us much better performance information about customer journeys. It is a firm foundation from which to build the Councils' digital services.

Later in the month the contact centre will be switched over to new technology which will enable better understanding of customers and why they telephone the council, improved performance management of the staff and some automated service delivery. The new technology is supporting the new number for both councils which is 0300 1234000.

Glen Horn – Enabled and Efficient Portfolio Holder

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Suzie Morley – Public Access Member with Special Responsibility