

## Executive Member Report to Council 24 July 2019

### Finance and Governance

#### 1. DECISIONS

##### Executive Meeting 11 June 2019

###### Universal Credit

- That the impact of Universal Credit since the full service was rolled out (from 3 October 2018), and the future implementation plans of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), be noted.

##### Strategic Plan 2018 – 2022 – Progress at year end 2018/19

- That the Council's 2018/19 Year-End Results report (Appendix 1), and the actions taken to address the issues set out within it, be noted.
- That the proposed revised Investment Strategy 2021/22 (Appendix 2) be approved.

##### Executive Meeting 11 July 2019

###### Discretionary Elements Policy Statement

- That the proposed changes to the policy be approved and the amended Discretionary Elements Policy Statement be replaced on the intranet.

###### Withdrawal of the Injury Allowance Scheme

- That the withdrawal of the Injury Allowance Scheme be approved with immediate effect but the continuation of payment of the allowances to the three existing recipients be supported.

###### Disposal of Denmark Street Car Park

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item on the grounds that, if present, there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information.

###### Executive/Delegated decisions planned before next Council

None

#### 2. STRATEGIC

While we do not have absolute confirmation of this, it looks increasingly unlikely that the planned three year Government Spending Review and the fair funding review will take place in time for implementation in the 2020/21 financial year. The Council will continue to develop its Medium Term Financial Plan and budget for 2020/21 and will need to make assumptions about future levels of funding; the increasing uncertainty around future funding remains one of our key strategic risks.

A set of briefings has been delivered to all Members on the financial position.

### 3. **INVOLVEMENT AND PROMOTION**

Since starting this role I have been meeting people across various departments who impact on this subject. I would like to say we have some very dedicated staff who, first of all, enjoy working for the Council, which obviously makes for a happy environment and are giving their all to make this a very efficiently run establishment.

### 4. **PERFORMANCE**

These are our Strategic Priorities for 2019 / 2020

<b>Our Business Imperatives</b>	<b>Our Business Imperatives (cont)</b>	<b>Supporting Social Regeneration</b>
<b>Deliver the 2019/19 Statement of accounts on time and unqualified</b>	<b>Ensure that we continue to support delivery of the Change Programme</b>	<b>Increase the proportion of Council budgets spent locally.</b>
<b>Develop a balanced budget for 2020/21</b>	<b>Streamline the governance of programmes and projects</b>	<b>Review revenues and benefits services</b>
<b>Maintain an accurate Medium-Term Financial Plan</b>	<b>Make further progress on our ICT strategy</b>	<b>Change how we use bailiff services</b>
<b>Plan and deliver the 2019 elections</b>	<b>Complete the review of legal services</b>	<b>Promote the South Tees Community Bank</b>
<b>Work with the Mayor to revise the Vision for Middlesbrough</b>	<b>Review future arrangements for pensions administration</b>	<b>Better promote our jobs and apprenticeships locally</b>
<b>Update the Strategic Plan for 2020/21 in line with the new vision</b>		<b>Launch the Civic Community Awards</b>

I will provide relevant updates throughout the year.

### **REVENUES & BENEFITS**

#### **Customer Services Excellence**

I am pleased to announce that our Revenues and Benefits team successfully retained the Customer Services Excellence Accreditation in January 2019, with this year marking an unbroken attainment of the award since 1998. Customer Service Excellence is designed to measure how organisations put the customer at the forefront of their business. Certification is based on a robust assessment of 57 elements, grouped into 5 criteria and cover Customer Insight, Culture and the Organisation, Information and Access, Delivery and timeliness and Quality of Service.

The service has to demonstrate year on year improvements, with the most recent years being assessed at compliance plus 'Elite Status' in 7 areas. The comments from the assessor 'Revenues and Benefits are delivering to a standard that others should aspire to'...

This is an excellent achievement and acknowledges the high level of commitment the Service has to delivering customer services to the residents of Middlesbrough.

### **HUMAN RESOURCES**

#### **Appraisals**

Annual appraisals have taken place during March and April, employees have been appraised against the 5 Corporate Values and associated behaviours. The outcome information has been collected and will be presented to the Wider Leadership Team in late July. This is the third year under the current system and a discussion will be held about how we take this forward.

### **Leavers and Movers Process**

The new process for Leavers and Movers launched in April. Part of the new process includes a Face-to-Face Exit Conversation for leavers and movers and an optional online Leavers Questionnaire for those exiting the organisation. HR will monitor the information received and it will provide an opportunity to find out what the Council is doing well and where improvements can be made.

### **Recruitment Website**

Work is now completed to improve the Council's recruitment pages on the internet. The aim is to attract candidates, maintain their interest and capture their attention on their visit to the site. The new pages promote the benefits for working for Middlesbrough Council, highlight the local area / Tees Valley and the offer of retail, restaurants, arts and entertainment, convenient transport links and lower price housing. Candidates are also being asked for their feedback on the application process to help us improve further.

### **Internal Audit**

TVAAS have carried out an audit on Corporate Culture as part of their audit work and have reported a good level of assurance.

Tees Valley Audit and Assurance Service considers there to be a Good Control environment with room for improvement in relation to the areas examined. Based on the audit work undertaken an effective system of internal control is in operation but is not always applied consistently.

TVAAS state that: This audit does not represent a detailed assessment of the Council's corporate culture but provides an opinion based on the Council's position against several high level questions posed in the Risk in Focus report 2018. Overall based on those questions, the Council has good arrangements in place to secure a positive culture where staff should feel valued and recognised for the contribution they make. At the time of the audit, the Council had a clear vision and Strategic Plan 2019-22 which outlined the organisational aims for the years ahead.

The Council's values are clearly stated in its Strategic Plan and the values of collaborative, integrity, creative, passionate and focussed have been regularly communicated. The values are incorporated into recruitment documentation so that the expected values are clearly communicated to all prospective employees.

The council proactively assesses the satisfaction of its staff by an annual survey which is voluntary and all employees are invited to participate. Participation in the survey was encouraged via various communications and reminders issued. The survey is managed by the Council's HGR department although an Employee Engagement Group has been set up to review the approach to be taken in future. Depending on available resources, it may be beneficial for the Council to consider requesting an external organisation to carry out a survey for example, once every three years to provide a more extensive organisation culture audit offering a different approach and analysis of the results.

The Council has procedures for reporting concerns including grievance procedures and whistleblowing procedures. It is recommended that the next staff satisfaction survey enquires of staff how confident they feel to raise concerns via the various mechanisms available to them.

**Chris Hobson**  
**Executive Member Finance and Governance**