

Portfolio Holder Report – Council 11 December 2013

By Cllr Jackie Branson – Governance and Logistics

Legal, Democratic and Electoral

The Legal Service has hosted a half day conference on Alternate Service Delivery Models. Many services sent representatives who were able to participate, asking many of those questions you may be embarrassed to ask.

Democratic Services – Tristan Fieldsend has successfully been appointed to the Scrutiny role from his trainee post and a new trainee, Jack Caine, will start work on the 5th December which will mean that the team are now fully resourced.

Elections - The team have again delivered a very successful by-election with the successful candidate being Councillor Peter Wade (Con). The team are now busy with individual registration and will begin preparations for the European and Borough elections on 22nd May 2014.

Audit & Governance

The Governance and Audit Committee had its first meeting on 20 November. This started with a presentation from External Audit on their role. There will be a presentation from Internal Audit before the next meeting, which will be open to all Councillors.

Revenues and Benefits

Council Tax cash collection

The Council Tax cash collection rate is currently running behind the rate achieved last year. Up to the end of October, we have collected £36.862m out of a total of £55.228m that is due to be collected for 2013/14. This equates to an in-year collection rate of 66.75% compared to 67.39% at the same point last year.

Although the reduction is almost certainly due to a wide range of issues including the general economic situation and the impact of the wider welfare reforms; the reduction in Council Tax Support scheme payments and the increased charges for empty properties and second homes are significant factors.

The Council Tax team are actively pursuing all available recovery methods and will continue to do so in order to maximise collection and improve the collection rate.

Facilities Management

The facilities team has been working hard on external room bookings and from 1st April until 1st November 2013 we have managed income from room bookings to the tune of £12,200. This is an excellent first half of the year and it is hoped that this will increase much further during the remaining months in 2013/2014.

A further £2,000 of income has also been achieved in the first 7 months through the FM team offering to provide catering (vending) to those booking the room in the event suite.

Councillor Training and Development

It is recognised that Councillors will need help to prepare for the various roles they may hold in the Council, as well as ongoing training to help them develop and fulfil their role effectively and, with this in mind, I have been working with the officers to put together a programme of Councillors' training for the next few months.

A range of different types of training and skills development for Councillors at different stages of their career have been identified and, in addition to the corporate training programme, there will also be Councillors who have individual training needs and these will be addressed as and when required.

Key to the success of this training programme will be good attendance and I strongly urge all Councillors to make every effort to attend those training sessions that are relevant to their individual roles. I will be working with Cllr Leah Turner and the Governance and Logistics Scrutiny Panel to review progress with regard to delivery of the programme and assess its effectiveness with a view to deciding how the programme might be further developed for the future. Members' evaluation and feedback will be important in helping us to take this forward

From time to time, parallel training sessions will be facilitated at both Havant and East Hants and these training sessions will be open to members of both authorities in order to give Councillors greater flexibility by offering two options in terms of dates and times.

Details of the programme have already circulated to all Councillors for noting in your diaries, and invitations for forthcoming planned training sessions will be sent out shortly.