



AGENDA ITEM: 5(a)

CABINET: 17 March 2015

Report of: Borough Solicitor / Transformation Manager

Relevant Managing Director: Managing Directors

Relevant Portfolio Holder: Councillor D Westley / D Whittington

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SUBJECT: ORGANISATIONAL RE-ENGINEERING – LEGAL AND MEMBER SERVICES

Wards affected: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To consider the findings and recommendations for savings and service improvements contained within the attached “Organisational Re-Engineering (OR) review of Legal and Member Services Report” (OR Report) prepared by CPC Project Services LLP (see Appendix 1).

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET

2.1 That the OR Report at Appendix 1 be noted and staff thanked for their participation.

2.2 That the recommendations set out in Paragraph 1.15.1 ‘Member Services’ and 1.15.2 ‘Legal Services’ of the OR Report at Appendix 1 be implemented by the Borough Solicitor as set out in the Action/Comments Columns of Appendices 2, 3A and 3B respectively, subject to 2.3 and 2.4 below.

2.3 That to enable implementation of the recommendations referred to in 2.2 above: (a) the short term post of “Practice Administrator” be created at PO3 for a period of two years, and (b) a sum of £65,000 in relation to implementation of Modern Gov, the development of Iken, and Iken training be provided, those costs to be met from the Major Projects Reserve, with any further resources being subject to the preparation of a business case and approval through the usual processes.

2.4 That the use of Kalamazoo paper for minutes be continued.

3.0 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Following a mini tender exercise CPC Project Services LLP (CPC) were chosen from the OR (Efficiency Reviews) Framework as Consultants to conduct an OR review in Legal and Member Services. CPC's brief was to conduct an OR Review and make appropriate recommendations to ensure that the services operate in the most efficient, effective and economic manner. Full details of the brief are set out in the OR Report.
- 3.2 20% of the Council's OR Managers time was allocated to oversee this review, including acting as a point of reference for the consultants; the cost of this was funded from the General Revenue Account. The remaining 80% of the OR Manager's time was funded from the Housing Revenue Account to allow the OR Manager to conduct reviews within the Council's Housing and Regeneration Service.
- 3.3 Staff at all levels were fully engaged in various ways during the course of the review, for example by taking part in staff workshops and completing data analysis. The OR Report at Appendix 1 provides comprehensive details of the findings and subsequent recommendations.
- 3.4 The work in relation to the Colns/Modern Gov systems has been particularly helpful and needs investment of time, which is currently unavailable in house, to implement the recommendations.
- 3.5 The OR review relates to Services which have been the subject of significant reductions in both staff numbers and budget resources through various recent exercises, made on the understanding that there would be a reduction in workload; see paragraph 2.4, at pages 21 and 22 of the OR Report. However, the OR Report identifies the fact that rather than a reduction in workload, workload has increased.
- 3.6 Various measures have already been taken to gain efficiency as is highlighted in the OR Report. Iken case management software has been purchased and provides significant benefits in terms of management of files and use of template documentation. It can also assist in gaining income for Legal Services by time recording costs efficiently for recovery from other parties via various arrangements and within court proceedings. However, the system needs significant development through the investment of time which is currently not available due to workloads.

4.0 HIGH LEVEL FINDINGS / RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE REVIEW

- 4.1 The recommendations from the OR Report have been extracted and are attached at Appendices 2, 3A and 3B to this report, together with comments and action points in the right hand column of the appendices.
- 4.2 The recommendations in relation to the potential development of the ColnS software have now been investigated and it has been demonstrated that the ColnS

system will not have sufficient functionality to fulfil the Council's future requirements as identified within the OR Report. Therefore in line with the OR Report the Modern Gov option is now recommended as the preferred option for the Council, having scored highest on appraisal of its functionality (the qualitative assessment) and will assist the delivery of electronic agendas etc.

5.0 SAVINGS/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are a number of areas where the Consultant identified that short-term additional investment is required in order to improve service delivery and/or create greater efficiency. While these costs will be met from within existing corporate budgets wherever possible, some additional expenditure is required to be met from the Major Projects Reserve. Any additional costs being subject to the preparation of a valid business case and future approval through the usual processes.
- 5.2 The costs comprise a sum of £25000 for the further development of Iken and £40,000 for implementation of Modern Gov. in line with the recommendations of the OR report, together with salary and on-costs for a temporary post identified in the OR report; namely a temporary Practice Administrator (PO3) at £47,370 per annum maximum. The Modern Gov costs are being refined and it is expected that ongoing revenue costs will be broadly neutral, but will enable ongoing savings in budgets through the take up of electronic delivery of agendas. The delivery of the Consultant's recommendations will not be achieved without specialist assistance from an experienced Practice Administrator, to carry out the work identified in the OR Report. There is sufficient funding within the Major Projects Reserve to meet the total cost of up to £159,740 that will be required to implement these recommendations. In the OR Report there is a recommendation for additional legal resource, eg a temporary Assistant Solicitor post, to deliver on the additional workload, as identified in the OR Report and referred to above, and ensure the legal team has sufficient capacity to implement the recommendations with the assistance of the Practice Administrator. However, the need for additional capacity within the service had already been identified, notably to handle workload for Housing, including that due to self financing, particularly development and redevelopment initiatives; increases in Planning work, particularly enforcement; new data protection/SIRO work and work arising from legislative changes under the Localism Act 2011 and the transparency agenda. An Assistant Solicitor post was approved at the budget Council meeting on 25 February. That resource will enable delivery of the recommendations of the OR report along with the handling of the ongoing additional workload.
- 5.3 The OR report identifies the opportunity to achieve potential ongoing annual cashable savings of up to £5,101 in Member Services and up to £1,993 in Legal Services. Once the implementation has been completed the cash savings that have actually been realised will be built into the base budget. The OR report also identifies the potential opportunity to save up to 80 hours per year of Members Services time and up to 768 hours per year of Legal Services time. Comments on the deliverability of cashable savings and efficiencies are given in Appendices 2, 3A & 3B to the report. It is intended that any time savings that are generated following the implementation will be re-invested back into these services. There is a request for members to consider the need to retain Kalamazoo paper for records of minutes (items 4 and 14, Appendix 3A). If chosen this would result in a £100 saving each year.

6.0 IMPLEMENTATION

- 6.1 As with all OR reviews, once Cabinet has agreed the recommendations an Implementation Manager from the Service will be responsible for ensuring that all changes are implemented. The Borough Solicitor has been identified as the Implementation Manager. Using the resources identified at 5.2 above he will work with the Legal and Member Services teams to ensure that the appropriate recommendations are implemented successfully.
- 6.2 Implementation of appropriate recommendations in the OR Report as set out in Appendices 2, 3A and 3B will hopefully enable the Council to continue to work within the existing level of permanent resources, despite increases in workload, rather than meet the increase in workload with additional staffing. This is particularly important in Legal Services in the context of substantial further Major Service Review Policy options needing to be planned for in 2015/16 and implemented in 2016/17 which will need significant legal input.

7.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 OR helps generate efficiency and savings for the authority, whilst simultaneously driving up the quality of services. The ability to be able to achieve this is fundamentally important due to the challenging economic climate, together with escalating customer expectations.

8.0 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 Risk assessments have been conducted throughout the project. Any potential risks are identified within each section of the attached OR Report. The effective delivery of the functions provided by Legal and Member Services is crucial to the operation of the Council. The delivery of the recommendations will benefit all services and ensure that cost effective and timely Legal and Member Services are provided for the future.

Background Documents

There are no background documents (as defined in Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) to this Report.

Equality Impact Assessment

The decision does not have any direct impact on members of the public, employees, elected members and / or stakeholders. Therefore no Equality Impact Assessment is required.

Appendices

Appendix 1: CPC Project Services Organisational Re-engineering Review of Legal & Member Services Report (inc. Appendices).
(Circulated separately)

Appendix 2: OR Review of Legal and Member Services Report –
Recommendations with ‘Action’ column.

Appendix 3A: OR Report Service Redesign Recommendations – Member
Services.

Appendix 3B: OR Report Service Redesign Recommendations – Legal Services.