

## **7f. REPORT OF THE CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND RESOURCES**

### **Update on Head of Legal Services**

Buckinghamshire County Council has appointed Hugh Peart as its new Shared Head of Legal to succeed Anne Davies, who is retiring. Hugh is currently Director of Legal and Governance Services at London Borough of Harrow. Hugh will divide his time between the two authorities, and explore ways in which the two councils' legal functions can work more closely together to share expertise, cut duplication and reduce costs. He starts on April 1.

Currently BCC and Harrow are the only two Councils in the country that have been successful in forming ABS companies. Hugh's appointment to the joint council role will be separate from both companies' operations. Working with Harrow will give BCC additional opportunities for our legal team to generate income from new customers.

I would like to thank Anne Davies for her hard work over the years and send our best wishes for retirement.

### **Provision of OD Service to London Borough of Harrow**

The BCC People and Organisational Development Team led by Frances Mills will be providing organisational development services to Harrow Council with effect from 1 April 2015 for three years in the first instance. The team will be developing new organisational values and behaviours, leadership programmes and engagement strategies as well as embedding Harrow's new employee appraisal scheme and supporting organisational change programmes. The arrangement will allow us to retain and grow our existing OD team keeping existing expertise and growing new skills and to generate income in line with our Future Shape ambitions.

### **Future Shape Update**

The Future Shape organisation officially went live on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015. A lot of work has been undertaken in the Business Units and across the Council to ensure we move to our new operating framework successfully. Two areas are yet to go through their consultations and restructure. Work is being undertaken to progress this for staff in the Communities, Health and Adult Social Care Business Unit and the Children's Social Care and Learning Business Unit.

The new shape organisation may mean a change to roles and responsibility for many employees. A leaflet detailing the key changes is available to all Members and information is available in the Member zone of the intranet. Work is continuing to deliver the benefits from the programme through a range of projects including redesign of the organisation, digital programme, strategic options appraisals and ensuring that we deliver value from our asset base.

### **Enhanced technology and Mobile working for Social Workers**

A key element of our response to the OFSTED improvement plan is improving the technology support for social workers in the field. Staff in Children's Social care and IT have been working closely together to develop mobile solutions and improved business processes.

We are in the process of trialling a comprehensive package of technology improvements that include a variety of laptops that are light and easy to use matched with a companion device such as the latest mobile phones. These changes will ensure that we have provided our social workers with the best possible equipment and opportunity to communicate and work in an agile fashion. IT and social work staff are also exploring the options for applications that will improve efficiency in the field and critically enable more social work time to be spent with the family and young people. We have also rolled out tablets to improve efficiency in fostering and adoption panels.

### **Social Worker Recruitment**

A national shortage of Social Workers has had a massive impact on our ability to attract and retain qualified staff over the past couple of years. Since the start of the year we have renewed our effort to attract staff aided by an enhanced reward package. To date we have attracted 12 permanent social workers from the UK and also made 13 permanent offers following a successful campaign in Romania. We have also had a great response to a 'return to social work campaign' to attract social workers who have taken time out, back into the profession, supported by appropriate training. We are also continuing to invest in the recruitment and training of new social workers and have recently launched a major new training scheme called the Social Work Academy, a formal partnership between Buckinghamshire County Council and Buckinghamshire New University. This will consist of regular masterclasses for students, new social workers and more experienced staff, providing ongoing up-to-date training for whoever needs or wants it.

### **NCO Mezzanine re design /refurbishment project**

The Regeneration and Infrastructure project team is undertaking a redesign of the New County Offices Mezzanine meeting area. The target is to provide multi-functional modern meeting space built to facilitate the up-to-date business needs of Buckinghamshire County Council.

The project has aims to be fully operational by the end of 2015. The development will provide totally flexible meeting provision, enabling an offer of a large meeting space able to accommodate 200 people, which can be divided into a maximum of 5 individual meeting spaces for 15 people each as well as a number of other possible configurations.

The specification will include:

- Flood WIFI
- Specialist AV provision including webcam where required
- Adjustable lighting
- Screens in all rooms
- Toilet facilities in the circulation areas
- Air conditioning

**PETER HARDY  
CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE AND RESOURCES**