



Report to the Finance, Performance and Resources Select Committee

Title:	Business Services Plus Business Unit Plan
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Cabinet Member sign-off:	John Chilver, Cabinet Member for Resources

Purpose of Agenda Item

Select Committee has requested to view the Business Plan for Business Services Plus (BSP) to understand its key functions, priorities and the plans in place to meet these priorities. The Select Committee also wants assurances that any activities attached can be delivered within the given budget. The Committee has also expressed an interest in BSP's income generation strategy and its plans around shared services.

Background

As part of the Future Shape restructure, BSP has been operational since 1st April 2015. BSP is the County Council's internal support services unit, which is focused on delivering high quality, customer-focused services to support frontline business units and external customers. It was formed from the former Resources and Business Transformation (RBT) directorate and includes:

- Corporate Business Support
- Customer Contact
- Finance (excluding HQ Assurance functions, e.g. strategic finance, risk and audit)
- HR
- ICT
- Legal
- Procurement
- Property (excluding Corporate Landlord and major projects)

Property is a new addition to BSP's service portfolio, having transferred from the former PLACE service. The functions that have transferred are Facilities Management and Building Services (including management of the Bilfinger Europa contract), which has allowed us to create a joined-up, inclusive support service offer, improving the experience for customers.

In addition to providing services to the County Council, BSP does business with more than 250 external customers, including schools, academies, charities, and other public authorities such as Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire & Rescue Authority, Milton Keynes Council and Harrow Council. As local authority, we are not legally able to make profit on the sale of services but the income from these organisations makes a contribution to our overheads, allowing us to sustain services we could not otherwise afford and reducing back office costs to protect frontline services.

To support this activity, and with one of the Council's main focuses becoming more commercially minded, we have also introduced a new Commercial Team for the business unit. This has bought commercial focus to the business unit, which includes securing new business, building relationships to ensure repeat business and looking to share services with other organisations.

Summary

The business plan sets out BSP's key services, how it will achieve its MTP savings and opportunities for further income generation and process transformation.

Key issues

With the inclusion of Property services, the business unit has inherited an overspend which its leadership team are working to manage. Although this is still a significant risk, good progress has been made: in 2015, the overspend was forecast at £1.2m but this has been managed down to £380k with potential remaining to balance the budget overall as a business unit at year-end. This is attributed not only to the hard work of Property services but to the diligence of all colleagues during the non-essential spending freeze in managing public money carefully to bring the budget back on track.

Other issues are the lack of funding for Legionella and asbestos testing of the County Council's buildings, which the Cabinet Member has set as a priority to be addressed, and recruitment and retention challenges in some of the key professions, including building surveying, ICT and procurement.

Resource implications

As a support service, rising demand on the frontline and challenges in other areas of the organisation invariably has an impact on BSP. Significant resources have been contributed to the Council's Ofsted Improvement Plan, particularly to make enhancements in ICT and to our HR processes. The progress made has been reflected in the most recent inspection.

Good progress has been made on income generation with limited resources for business development and we have been successful in securing business with new customers such as independent schools, charities and other local authorities. We have seen an incremental increase in our external revenue; recent investments in technology, including our e-commerce capability and sales management database should allow us to take this even further.

Next steps

The BSP Business Plan Executive Summary is due for sign off at Cabinet on 18th February.

Sessions are planned across the business unit to communicate the business plan to colleagues and to ensure that they understand how their roles directly contribute to the successful delivery of our priorities.