**Service Area Plan 2020/21**

# Part 1 - Service Information/links to policy

**Part 2 – Managing Service Delivery**

**Part 3 – Managing and Improving People**

### Part 4 – Budget

**Part 5 – Managing Planned Changes/Projects**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Service Area :** | Finance |
| **Service Area Manager:** | Mike Snow – Head of Finance |
| **Deputy Chief Executive:** | Andrew Jones |
| **Portfolio Holder(s):** | Councillor Richard Hales |

1 Purpose of the Services Provided

* To seek to ensure that the Council’s finances are well managed, in accordance with best practice whilst ensuring best value and value for money is always obtained.
* To ensure that suppliers can do business with the Council and be able to tender fairly on an equal basis along with all other prospective businesses.
* To provide sound and understandable financial advice and a responsive support service to enable members and officers to make the right decisions and to ensure the Council’s services are properly managed.
* To seek to provide assurance that all risks are being properly managed and controls are in place.
* To provide the right benefits that claimants are due at the right time.
  1. **Linkages to Fit For the Future Strategy**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **External** | **Direct** | **Indirect** |
| **Service**  **(Green, Clean and Safe)** |  | Finance provides the funds to provide services, and seeks to ensure that funds are correctly used, whilst presenting value for money. |
| People(Health, Homes and Communitites) | Benefits service assists tenants afford their homes, by awarding housing benefits and council tax reduction. Administration of the discretionary housing payments scheme for claimants receving housing benefit toprevent homelessness.  RUCIS grants. |  |
| **Money**  **(Infrastructure, Enterprise and Employment)** | Benefits and Procurement assist in providing funding which will circulate in the local economy.  Using our discretionary powers in Business Rates enables businesses to get assistance by way of discounts | Procurement joined Better Business for all group (BBFA) to support local businesses in procuring council contracts to help build the local economy |
|  | | |
| **Internal** | **Direct** | **Indirect** |
| **Service**  **(Maintain or Improve services)** | Customer services telephones and face to face are aiming to encourage and support customers to self serve in line with the digital by default policy. | The Audit and Risk service provides an assurance framework to ensure all resources are correctly deployed, whilst providing value for money.  The Procurement service provides a contract management framework to ensure contracts achieve value for money and best performance. |
| **People**  **(Effective Staff)** | Procurement are partnering with other services to empower them to carry out best procurement practices effectively. |  |
| **Money**  **(Firm Financal Footing over long term)** | Ensuring the Council’s finances are on a firm footing is a key priority for Finance. |  |

|  | **Direct** | **Indirect** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **All Themes** | The support services within Finance (Accountancy, Audit/Risk, Procurement, FSTeam), and Council Tax/Business Rates directly and indirectly contribute to all the themes by providing finance and support services for the Council’s services. | |

##### 2 Managing Service Delivery

**2.1 Service Overview**

(NB – Specify main aspects of service delivery during the year)

|  | **Service Being Delivered** | **Priorities (with Justification)** | **Service Demand** | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Accountancy** | **Budget/Council Tax Setting** | Ensure council tax and budget setting complies with legislation, meets Council priorities and is within available resources. | Statutory Requirement |  |
|  | **Budget Review** | To monitor income and expenditure on an on-going basis and assess implications for medium term financial strategy, reporting regularly to SMT and members. | 11 Budget Review Reports to SMT, 6 Reports to Executive |  |
|  | **Final Accounts** | Ensure annual accounts closed down correctly and promptly. Production of Annual Statement of Accounts within statutory deadlines. Liaison with external auditors. | Statutory Requirement |  |
|  | **Treasury Management** | Manage the Council’s investments to minimise risk whilst securing the optimum return. Manage the Council’s cashflow and borrowing. Funding the Council’s Capital Programme. |  | £99m investment peak as at January 2020 |
|  | **Financial advice** | Advise officers and members of the financial implications of proposed actions and decisions and provide appropriate challenge. |  |  |
|  | **Financial Planning** | Forecast the Council’s income and expenditure for the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy and HRA Business Plan. |  |  |
|  | **Parish/town council support** | Arrange payments to parish/town council in respect of precepts. |  |  |
| **Audit & Risk** | **Internal Audit** | Provision of comprehensive internal audit service for management in line with the Internal Audit Strategic Plan. | Statutory requirement. | Approx.39 audits completed p.a. |
|  | **Risk Management** | Promote and advise on good risk management across the authority. | Statutory requirement. Effective corporate governance. |  |
|  | **Insurances** | Ensure that the Council is appropriately insured in the provision of its services and manage any resulting claims. | Effective corporate governance. |  |
|  | **Investigations** | Undertake ad-hoc internal investigations on behalf of management. | Effective corporate governance. |  |
|  | **Fraud investigation** | Undertake investigations into fraud against the council in respect of services such as council tax, business rates, house lettings. Promotion of fraud awareness. |  |  |
| **Benefits & customer Services** | **Housing Benefits** | Assessment and payment of claims for housing benefit in line with DWP scheme. | Changes processed p.a  New claims determined p.a | 22,385  492 |
|  | **Council Tax Reduction** | Assessment of council tax reduction claims in line with Council’s scheme. Including administering discretionary housing payments to housing benefit and universal credit customers. | Changes processed p.a  New claims determined p.a | 13,607  2,039 |
|  | **Customer Service Team** | Take Revenues, Benefits and Switchboard telephone calls | Service calls pa  Switchboard calls | 35,000  10,000 |
|  | **Reception/One Stop Shops** | To work with WCC to ensure customers can obtain the services they need efficiently and effectively as possible. | No of face to face enquiries pa | 50,000 |
| **Exchequer** | **Collection of Council Tax** | Maintenance of council tax records, award of reliefs, calculation of tax due, billing and recovery thereof. | Council tax payers  Reliefs & discounts | 65,494  22,500 |
|  | **Collection of Business Rates** | Maintenance of business rates records, award of reliefs, calculation of rates due, billing and recovery thereof. | Business Rate payers  Reliefs & discounts | 5,400  3,500 |
|  | **Recovery of CT, BR and Benefit overpayments** | Take appropriate action to recover sums due to the Council, including use of magistrates courts. | Summonses  Reminder notices  Collectible per annum | 6,000  27,500  £200m |
|  | **Payment of suppliers** | Arrange payment to suppliers for goods ordered. | Transactions  Paid to suppliers | 8,000  £60m |
|  | **Recovery of sundry debts** | Raise sundry debt accounts for sums due to the Council, and recovery thereof. | Transactions  Collected pa | 11,000  £10m |
|  | **Rural and Urban Capital Initiatives Scheme** | Manage the Council’s RUCI scheme, making recommendations to Executive on grant awards, payment and monitoring of awards agreed. | Budget  Applications per annum | £150,000  10 |
| **Procurement** | **Manage corporate procurement** | Review and develop the Council’s approach to procurement, management of the Council’s Procurement Strategy and completion of the Procurement Action Plan. |  |  |
|  | **Maintain contracts registers** | Work with officers across the Council to ensure that the Council’s contract register is correct, is duly published, and contracts within the register are appropriately managed. | Contracts on Contracts Register | 250 |
|  | **Lead/advise on procurement and tenders** | Advise and assist officers in the procurement of goods and services in line with the Council’s Code of Procurement Practice and EU Regulations. | Number of procurement activities undertaken | 28 awarded; 33 live; 26 future planned |

**2.2 Measures**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Customer Measures – those important to the people/organisations who use our services**  Note: these measures should be used on a daily, weekly or monthly basis to identify the impact of interventions in the system and to plan future interventions. Interventions may be very small adjustments to resources, or may involve transformational change | | | | | | | |
|  | Qtr. 1 | | 2 | | 3 | | 4 |
| Average number of days from receipt of all information to determine new benefit/reduction claims. |  | |  | |  | |  |
| Average number of days from receipt of all information to determine changes to benefit/reduction claims. |  | |  | |  | |  |
| Prompt payment of invoices within agreed payment terms |  | |  | |  | |  |
| Unqualified audit statement on Statement of Accounts |  | |  | |  | |  |
| Timely and informed Budget and Financial Forecasts |  | |  | |  | |  |
| Number of Benefits/Revenues calls to Customer Service Centre. |  | |  | |  | |  |
| Efficient & timely CTax processing (Age of oldest item) - Days |  | |  | |  | |  |
| Number of CTax correspondence awaiting processing |  | |  | |  | |  |
| Efficient & timely NNDR processing (Age of oldest item) – Days |  | |  | |  | |  |
| Number of formal legal challenges received and upheld against the total number of tenders |  | |  | |  | |  |
| Number of local suppliers actively registered on CSWJETS E Portal |  | |  | |  | |  |
| Percentage of suppliers on a procured contract where annual spend os greater then £5,000. Prior year figures to be reported. |  | |  | |  | |  |
| **Operational Measures – other (non customer) measures essential to ensure that “purpose” can be achieved.**  Note: this section will not be used by most service areas as their Customer Measures are expected to be sufficient. However, there may be cases where an operational measure is required to ensure the smooth running of a service area. | | | | | | | |
|  | Qtr. 1 | 2 | | 3 | | 4 | |
| Sundry Debt balance outstanding over 90 days |  |  | |  | |  | |
| Numbers of transactions – orders, creditor invoices, sundry debtor invoices |  |  | |  | |  | |
| Value cashable and non-cashable fraud savings detected. |  |  | |  | |  | |
| Council tax collection rate |  |  | |  | |  | |
| NNDR collection rate |  |  | |  | |  | |
| Number of new Council tax dwellings from April 2020 |  |  | |  | |  | |
| Business Rate Growth (Rateable Value) |  |  | |  | |  | |
| Completion of Internal Audit Plan (percentage variation to profiled plan) |  |  | |  | |  | |
| No of Outstanding appeals (Business Rates) |  |  | |  | |  | |
| % of collaborative contracts |  |  | |  | |  | |
| Number of Approved Exemptions per quarter |  |  | |  | |  | |

**2.3 Managing Risk**

| **Risk** | **Planned Actions during year** | Comments |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Budget | * Regular budget monitoring |  |
| Procurement | * Management of corporate procurement * Continue provision of Procurement training. * Attendance of key officers at in-house training. * Maintenance of Finance and Council Contract Register |  |
| Contract Management | Attendance of appropriate officers on Introduction to Procurement and Contract Management training. |  |
| Audits | * Internal Audits of various Finance functions scheduled for year in accordance with Internal Audit Plan. * External Audit of Statement of Accounts and grant claims. |  |
| Risk Management | * Risks reviewed at management team meeting and on on-going basis * Quarterly risk register review with portfolio holder. * Risk Management Action plan being formulated for 2020/21. |  |
| Service Assurance | • Actions arising out of Annual Service Assurance Statement include: -   * Update of Business Continuity Plan |  |
| Corporate Health and Safety | * Completion of H&S Assessments. |  |
| Service Delivery | * WDC/WCC Procurement Partnership. * Shared Services for Business Rates and Fraud Investigation. |  |

Part 3 – Managing and Improving People

**3.1 Staff Resource**

There are currently 81 FTE posts in the department.

**3.2 Workforce Planning**

| **Category** | **Sponsor** | **Activity** | **Budget Impact** | **Impact on other Service Areas** | **Milestones** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. Workforce Planning | Head of Service and Divisional Managers | Encourage training, coaching, mentoring etc of staff; assist them to maximise their potential and roles within the organisation. |  | Support from HR | On-going |
|  | Divisional Managers | Employment of apprentices. | Funded from corporate budget, Levy and existing pay budgets. | Support from HR | Appointment and subsequent completion of apprenticeship. |
| **2. Skills, Training, Competency Needs** | Head of Service and Divisional Managers | Formal staff training / professional qualifications to encourage them to maximise their potential. | Cost of professional training courses. | Support from HR | Staff commencing formal training.  Staff completing formal training. |
|  | Divisional Managers | On-going CPD training for staff. | Met out of existing budgets. |  | On-going, March 2021 |
| **3. Service Changes** |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Benefits and Customer Services Manager | Review OSS/Front Line staff and interaction with Customer Service Team and Back Office. |  | Potentially all service areas. | Completion March 2021 |
| **4. Determining the need for additional resource** |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Senior Procurement Business Partner | Review Procurement resources to ensure procurement actions progress to ensure that the Council fulfils its commitment to become net-zero carbon including contracted services. |  | Potentially all service areas. | Council Tax Referendum May 2020, subsequent Executive report. |

Part 4 BUDGET – Main budgetary pressures and changes

| **Activity** | **Budgetary Impact** | **2020/21** | **2021/22** | **2021/22** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Cost of new Financial Management System | Funded from 2020/21 New Homes Bonus | £600,000 |  |  |

**Part 5 – Managing Planned Changes, Major Work streams and Projects**

| **Change/Project** | **Sponsor/Lead Officer** | **Budget Impact** | **Impact on other Services** | **Milestones** | **Date** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| New Financial Management System | Andrew Jones | £600k agreed in 2020/21 | All service areas are stakeholders who will need to be consulted and involved throughout the process. | Contract Award  Project Plan | May 2020  June 2020 |
| Customer Service Team – review telephony enhancements to improve customer service. | Benefits and Customer Services Manager | Potential request for Service Tranformation Reserve funding |  | Reduction in calls received. | March 2021 |
| Universal Credit – monitor the effects of new claims going DWP. | Benefits and Customer Services Manager |  | Monitor changes in customer contacts.  Work with Housing Service as necessary. | Awaiting date of migration of existing working age claims to DWP as part of UC. | March 2021 |
| Customer service team face to face. Review service delivery, promotion of self-serve. | Benefits and Customer Services Manager | TBC |  | Initial review layout of reception.  Changes to working arrangments in place. | June 2020  March 2021 |
| Review potential alternative E-forms to streamline Council Tax Reduction and other processes. | Benefits and Customer Services Manager | Upfront cost, licence costs, potential processing savings. | Impact on Benefits and Exhequer Teams | Initial feasibility | July 2020 |
| Re-procurement of E-Procurement System | Senior Procurement Business Partner with other CWJETS partners | TBC | All | Pre-market engagement | July 2020 |
| Production of Sustainable Procurement Strategy and update supporting policies. | Senior Procurement Business Partner | TBC | All |  | March 2021 |
| Council Tax “Self Serve” (Open Channel) module, rolled out for use by customers via “Open Portal”. | Exchequer Manager |  |  | Open Channel enabled for all forms, soft launch.  Open Channel publicised to customers. | July  2020  Oct 2020 |
| Review Revenues/Benefits System contract. | Exchequer Manager |  | Housing, Finance | New contract in place for current provider. | Throughout 2020 Before contract end in Jun 2021 |
| Production of audited 2019/20 Accounts inc improved electronic WPs, planning for 2020/21 closedown. | Strategic Finance Manager |  | All services contribute to the closure process and need to adhere to deadlines. | Audited Accounts published.  Plan and preparation for 2020/21 Closure. | 31 July 2020  31 March 2021. |