

25 July 2018**Agenda Item: 12****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR CUSTOMERS, GOVERNANCE AND
EMPLOYEES****LEGAL SERVICES' LEXCEL ACCREDITATION****Purpose of the Report**

1. To inform Committee of the success of Legal Services in retaining the respected Lexcel accreditation thereby providing further assurance in relation to regulatory compliance by Legal Services.

Information

2. Lexcel is the Law Society's legal practice quality mark for excellence in practice management and client care. It provides a supportive management framework to help in-house legal departments enhance the services it provides to the wider organisation and any external clients. This not only supports regulatory compliance but also includes developing and maintaining consistent operational efficiencies, client services, managing risk effectively whilst reducing costs.
3. In order to achieve accreditation, legal teams are assessed in seven different areas of practice: structure and strategy, financial management, information management, people management, risk management, client care, and file and case management. Successful independent assessment demonstrates a legal team's commitment to consistently delivering services that meet client expectations, improve overall satisfaction and assist regulatory compliance.
4. Lexcel Accreditation is awarded for three years, with annual reaccreditation and monitoring to ensure continued compliance. The Council's Legal Service undertook its second annual maintenance assessment on the 26th and 27th June. The service has since received confirmation that the service will maintain its accreditation for another year; meaning that Legal Services has now successfully retained this accreditation for 17 years.
5. The assessor's final conclusions were that the service had demonstrated a number of areas of good practice including :
 - a. the introduction of an online text messaging service which operates independently from the Council's ICT network and enables managers to communicate effectively with staff in cases of emergency;

- b. adopting remote working as the norm which has enabled other services to be accommodated in the same office space. The service now operates on a 4:10 desk ratio thereby contributing to savings in respect of office accommodation reductions;
 - c. Maintaining the successful EM Lawshare Consortium arrangements, including a 4 year framework contract of seven law firms offering high quality advice at very competitive rates for the benefit of EM lawshare members. This membership currently comprises of over 140 public sector bodies;
 - d. achieving 94% client satisfaction feedback demonstrating the services provided are valued;
 - e. conducting all child safeguarding cases in the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Family Council using electronic court bundles;
 - f. operating an electronic case file management system in an excellent order which allows easy access for case file reviews and corrective action to be taken promptly;
 - g. maintaining comprehensive terms of engagement and service level agreements with clients;
6. The assessor also made a number of contributions for additional service improvements for best practice. The service will consider these areas and seek to adopt them provided it would be cost effective to do so and they are aligned with the Council's corporate policies and procedures.
7. In the independent assessor's overall summary comments, the assessor praised the service for maintaining high levels of commitment to maintain the LEXCEL standards. The assessor's report also acknowledged that the staff he had selected for interview were informative, receptive. This together with the ease of access to records (the majority of which were available electronically) ensured the assessment ran smoothly.
8. In his closing remarks, the assessor expressed his high regard for the service and that he continued to be impressed with the way in which the service operated.

Other Options Considered

- 9. None

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

- 10. To inform Governance and Ethics Committee of the quality standards maintained by Legal Services and to seek a view from Committee on whether it would wish to receive further annual reports.

Statutory and Policy Implications

- 11. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of

children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That members acknowledge the successful outcome of Legal Services' Lexcel assessment and agree to receive an annual update report regarding Legal Services performance and that this be included in the work programme.

Marjory Toward
Service Director Governance, Customers and Employees

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Constitutional Comments (SLB 13.7.2018)

12. The decision falls within the scope of matters that may be approved by the Governance and Ethics Committee

Financial Comments (SES 13/07/18)

13. There are no specific financial implications arising directly from this report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

- All