

22nd March 2021**Agenda Item: 4**

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR PLACE

IMPROVEMENT AND CHANGE IN THE PLACE DEPARTMENT

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of improvements and change in the Place Department with particular reference to progress against section four (the Improvement and Change Portfolio) of the Place Departmental Strategy. The strategy sets out how the Department will deliver the Council Plan commitments.

Information

2. The 2018/19 Place Departmental Strategy was agreed at Policy Committee in January 2018. A refreshed version of the plan was subsequently agreed at Policy Committee in May 2019, this covers the period 2019-2021.
3. This report provides progress within the Department since the last report to this Committee in November 2019.
4. The Place Improvement and Change Portfolio identifies three programmes of work. These are:
 - Our internal journey of improvement
 - Investment and commercial returns
 - Doing things differently with less

Progress

Our internal journey of improvement

5. There are an unprecedented volume of major projects approved and/or in delivery within the Place Department. The Department has implemented an enhanced governance and reporting structure to reflect this, and maintains an assurance dashboard which RAG rates the status of major projects and monitors progress, reporting upward to the monthly Place Major Programmes Board. This Board provides oversight, challenge and assurance across the programme. Despite the pandemic work continues to take place. In line with government guidance safe working arrangements have been put in place and risks are regularly assessed. To date the pandemic has not resulted in any significant delays in programmed activity.

6. The Place Department leadership skills and behaviours programme continues to be a key priority. Virtual induction virtual leadership sessions have taken place over the last few months. The Place Leadership Team continue to meet virtually on a regular basis to develop relationships and ideas for new ways of working. The pandemic has increased our collaboration with other Departments and some excellent work has taken place with both internal and external partners, resulting in significant developments such as the establishment of the Covid Community Hub, which has played a key role in supporting vulnerable residents over the last year.
7. Colleagues within the Performance, Intelligence and Policy team and ICT have been working with the Department to improve the way we assess and measure performance, with a particular focus on the development of more meaningful and measurable performance indicators..

Generating investment and improved commercial returns

8. Following a comprehensive review of our property services from 2018 to 2020 a report was taken to Policy Committee on 9 December 2020 seeking approval to recognise the achievements of the review and formally close the project. The two phases of the programme delivered:
 - A new Corporate Property Strategy 2018 – 2023
 - A restructure of the Property Service
 - The successful transfer of elements of property compliance work to Arc Partnership
 - The establishment of a corporate landlord programme to improve the safe management and maintenance of Council premises
 - New property internal governance arrangements, and an array of management process and system information improvements.
9. The review of our Catering and Facilities Management Service has taken place. A revised pricing policy and strategy have been implemented to support the Service to achieve break even status. However, the current pandemic has had a significant impact on the Service's school catering function, both in terms of activity and income. In consequence, the Service's original plans are currently under review.
10. Trading Standards commercial activities have been heavily impacted by Covid-19. Progress has come from work in the intervening period to agree revised contracts for 20/21 with many existing Primary Authority companies, as they recover from the business shock of the first lockdowns and adjust to the new Covid trading environment. The Service has also been able to form two new Primary Authority partnerships during this period, one of which was directly connected to a need for technical product support as a result of the move to home working under current Covid restrictions. Managers have also explored all opportunities to secure additional external funding to support the work done within the service.
11. The suspension of weddings and celebratory services during the pandemic has had a significant impact on the income within the Registration Service. Whilst it is expected that customers will rebook dates when these services are allowed to open there still could be a loss of income overall.

12. On the 29th March 2019 Nottinghamshire County Council purchased the Corserve shares and thereby became the sole owner of Via East Midlands Ltd. Prior to the pandemic, Via was producing a substantive pre tax profit and the total in 2019/20 was £0.8m. The COVID-19 Pandemic has affected the trading of Via during 2020/21 and in response Via have prepared a comprehensive business recovery plan. Assessments of the financial impacts and mitigation upon the turnover are being made on an ongoing basis. The budget forecast for 2020/21 shows a total turnover of £74m (including £19.5m Gedling Access Road major capital project) with a forecasted pre-tax profit of £0.1m after Covid impact.

Doing things differently with less

13. The Investing in Nottinghamshire Programme, which was established to ensure the best use of the corporate estate has been moving at pace. The programme, initially approved at Policy Committee in February 2020, agreed the exit of 6 office buildings across the current Council estate, with space being made available or retained for local government partners at a further 3 sites.
14. In December 2020 a further report was taken to Policy Committee to seek approval to scope and move the programme into the next phase of delivery. The report also set out the evolution of the programme in light of Covid-19. The learning from Covid-19 together with an engagement exercise has brought forward the evolution of the Council's Smarter Working vision. Digital technology will play a pivotal role within our future offices, enabling the hybrid physical and virtual office. Work is currently being undertaken alongside ICT Services to determine the Council's future approach to supporting dispersed/flexible working practices.
15. Policy Committee in December also agreed to vacate an additional 2 office bases across Nottinghamshire, whilst maintaining the countywide delivery of local services to local communities. It was agreed in principle that additionally, capacity within offices will be made available to local businesses (Small and Medium Enterprises) to provide workspace for them as part of the economic recovery from COVID-19, growing businesses and generating new jobs. Overall the Council will reduce its number of offices Countywide by a third throughout the delivery of this programme with anticipated gross financial savings now increased by a further £400k to an estimated £1.35m annually.
16. The Investing in Nottinghamshire Programme will also reduce the Council's environmental impact through lowering the carbon footprint of the Council's estate. The Council's Environmental Strategy was approved at Policy Committee in March 2020. This set out the Council's Strategic Aims and included targets to:
- i. Achieve excellent BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method) ratings for the new office accommodation at Top Wighay, with the ambition for the West Bridgford campus to become carbon neutral.
 - ii. Design environmental guidelines on achieving good to excellent BREEAM rating (or an equivalent environmental standard) for the design, construction and operation of all new builds by the Council.
 - iii. Increasing the production of renewable energy generated on the Council's estate.
17. Throughout this programme, relevant building projects have been considered against the aims of the Council's Environment Strategy with a view to achieving the highest possible positive environmental impact.

Other Options Considered

18. The matters set out in the report are intended to provide proportionate updates to the Sub-Committee of progress against key milestones. This approach has been previously agreed by the Sub-Committee and no other options were considered.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

19. The Council's Constitution requires each Committee to review performance in relation to the services provided on a regular basis. The terms of reference of the Improvement and Change Sub-Committee include responsibility for monitoring performance of the Council Plan and Departmental Plans are an extension of this, therefore this recommendation seeks to fulfil this requirement.

Statutory and Policy Implications

20. 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.

Financial Implications

21. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) The Improvement and Change Sub-Committee consider the progress against The Place Improvement and Change Portfolio outlined above and recommends whether any actions are required in relation to the detail in the report.

Adrian Smith
Corporate Director Place

For any enquiries about this report please contact:
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Constitutional Comments [KK 11/02/2021]

22. The proposal in this report is within the remit of the Improvement and Change Sub-Committee

Financial Comments [SES 10/02/2021]

23. 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.

Place Departmental Strategy 2018/2019 – report on Departmental Strategies to Policy Committee on 24 January 2018.

Place Departmental Strategy 2019 – 2021 – report on Departmental Strategies to Policy Committee on 22 May 2019.

Investing in Nottinghamshire, Making the Best Use of Council Premises - Policy Committee 12 February 2020

Investing in Nottinghamshire, Making the Best Use of Council Premises - Policy Committee 9 December 2020 - Investing in Nottinghamshire

Corporate Environment Strategy - Policy Committee 9 December 2020

Property Transformation Programme Closure Report and Corporate Landlord Model – Policy Committee 9 December 2020

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

- All