

RESOURCES SCRUTINY PANEL

11th December 2014

REVIEW OF THE CORPORATE SUPPORT TEAM

Report of the Director of Resources

STRATEGIC AIM:	All
---------------------------	------------

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide an update on the recent review of the Council's Corporate Support Team for the period January to June 2014.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Resources Scrutiny Panel is requested to consider the following recommendations:

- 2.1 **That the Resources Scrutiny Panel considers this report and notes the achievements of the team during their first six months of operation.**
- 2.2 **That the Resources Scrutiny Panel also notes the next stage in the delivery plan, which includes better support for members, particularly those with specific needs.**
- 2.3 **That the Resources Scrutiny Panel provides guidance on how they would like to see enhancements made to the level of service Members currently receive from the Corporate Support Team.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In 2013, a service review of the (then) separate Strategic Management Support Team and Democratic Service Team was undertaken. The aim of the review was to generate proposals to increase efficiency, minimise cost, increase resilience and the quality of service offered.
- 3.2 The findings of the review led to a Strategic Management Team (SMT) decision to combine the two teams to create one Corporate Support Team, where administrative functions, such as meeting support, would be delivered in a more generic way across the new team. It was proposed that a single Service Level Agreement (SLA) be developed to cover all functions in the combined team.

3.3 In December 2013, the Corporate Support Team was formally implemented. With a new management team (Head of Service, Team Manager and Team Coordinator), new methods of working, unfamiliar team colleagues and high expectations across the organisation, it was a challenging time for all concerned. Taking into consideration the Christmas break, unfilled vacancies and two individuals who exercised their right to redundancy under the restructure procedure; it is fair to say that the team did not start to deliver a structured service until early February 2014.

4. SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT AND ALLOCATION OF WORK

4.1 An SLA was created at the outset and shared with stake-holders for comment. As a result of their comments (largely focussing on meetings administration), SLA meetings and open dialogue throughout, various enhancements have been made to the original version. An agreed version was finally released in June 2014 and the team has continued to operate to this SLA since (attached as Appendix A).

4.2 It was agreed at the outset that the following allocation of resources would be available to support the needs of SMT, Heads of Service and Members.

Directorate	Resources
People	2 x Support Officers (g.4) 1.5 x Administrative Assistants (g.3)
Places	1 x Support Officer 0.5 x Administrative Assistants
Resources	0.5 x Support Officer * 0.5 x Administrative Assistant
Generic Tasks (including Members)	1 x Support Officer

* The role of FOI administrator takes up 0.5 of the Resources Support Officer.

4.3 A more flexible approach to the allocation of resources has now been developed as it soon became apparent that demand can vary depending on the needs of a service at a particular time.

4.4 Since implementation, the team has experienced a number of changes in the staffing complement. This has necessitated a certain amount of creativity and goodwill within the team in order to deliver our agreed service:

Month	Changes
December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Support Officer (Generic) recruited. • New Team Coordinator recruited. • New Team Manager recruited. • New Administrative Assistant recruited.
January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electoral Services Officer (ESO) – officer intending to take up this new post opted for redundancy. Post difficult to fill therefore consultant engaged. Post eventually filled in June. • Support Officer (Resources) – officer decided to take redundancy (per original restructure options) • New Support Officer (People) recruited
February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative Assistant promoted to Support Officer. • Consultant engaged for electoral role.
April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative Assistant resigned.
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Administrative Assistant recruited
June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support Officer resigned (to take up post as ESO) • Vacancies for Support Officer and 0.5 Administrative Assistant • Casual Support Officer engaged to fill above vacancies till December (and to carry out VIP visit role till end of July).

- 4.5 This frequent movement within the team has been unsettling but despite this, the team has continued to thrive and embrace their new roles. It should also be mentioned that the team delivered a European election, two neighbourhood referenda and several Parish Council elections during this time. The Individual Electoral Registration implementation programme was also in full flow with pressure from Central Government to deliver to strict targets and timescales.

5. ACHIEVEMENTS

5.1 Since the team's inception, they have registered a number of achievements through efficiencies in working practices and the creation of more robust governance frameworks. Some examples and how they align with the original objectives are listed below:

Objective	Achieved Y/N	Evidence
Increase Efficiency	Y	A full review of the Scrutiny process has taken place with some enhancements introduced
		Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) have been created for each process undertaken by the team. New officers can follow fully documented procedures thus reducing the time to train someone
		A more efficient use of IT such as individual laptops and the use of software to support the democratic process – reduced requirement for long-hand notes
		A more streamlined post opening process has been introduced
		The migration of files to the new Corporate Support “O” Drive file has taken place in order to create a more efficient repository
		171 plus meetings now covered as part of the SLA
		A development of Evaluation of Work spreadsheets to evidence allocation of time against specific duties
		The introduction of a meeting support matrix; gold, silver and bronze depending on type of support required is under development
		Development of an ‘inspection readiness’ programme is also in progress
		Minimise Costs
The Implementation of New MFD's (Printers) in conjunction with IT has taken place.		
Increase Resilience	Y	Resilience and increased knowledge across the team - officers have been trained to cover at least one other role within the team and to support the CEO's outer office during absence
		The development of a process for

		collecting Tenders to ensure we are operating lawfully.
Improve Quality of Service	Y	The Members' Register of Interests scheme has been brought up to date to ensure the Council is operating lawfully.
		A corporate Registration Process (for Officer interests) is being developed.
		Support for the Children's Peer Challenge Review has been provided with subsequent positive feedback.
		The FOI process has rapidly improved with the highest success rate in response times recorded despite the increase in the number of requests. A more streamline process has been introduced across the Council therefore reducing time spent on processing these requests.
		Improved statistics around the publication of meeting agendas and minutes.
		Improved knowledge of the Constitution – able to advise Chairs on aspects of meetings.
		Support for People First Review including the printing of Baselines and support in Baseline Meetings
		Executive Support training has been received and is being implemented.
		Minute taking training has been received
		A shift in attitude to 'can do' has taken place – the team are more creative in their approach to problems.
		The creation of generic email accounts which allow all team members to monitor thus ensuring customers receive prompt service.

6. ISSUES

6.1 As with any new process during the 'bedding in' period, some issues have arisen. Primarily, these concern the SLA and expectations of the level of service provided by the Corporate Support Team. In order to address these, several meetings have taken place with representatives from SMT and Heads of Service. Adjustments to the SLA have been made and in June, a final version of the SLA was agreed by all stakeholders. Some of the issues raised are listed below:

- Insufficient cover for meetings

- No facility for the typing of handwritten one to one notes
- No capacity for the preparation for inspection work
- People First Review assistance – short notice
- Level of Member support needs to be addressed
- Increasing font size in all documents

7. FEEDBACK AND PERFORMANCE AGAINST ORIGINAL OBJECTIVES

- 7.1 As part of this review, members of SMT and Heads of Service were asked if they would like to contribute to this report. Two responses were received from Mr Saverio Della Rocca and Ms Jackie Difolco:

JD - My overall comments would be that it has been a difficult transition although I feel since our last meeting things have improved by making the SLA more flexible to meet the demands and needs of the HOS team. Saying that, it was always going to take time to settle down and it feels like we are in a much better place. However going forward with the People review and changes to the Heads of Service roles, I am concerned about how things will pan out as more dedicated support will be required to enable us to be efficient. I think by mainstreaming some of the roles e.g. post etc. it has had an impact on support being provided in a timely way with delays in pieces of work being completed. Also, I feel that training is required for staff as there have sometimes been difficulties with formatting of reports and leaflets etc. but I know you are planning to do this. It's a shame that it is to change again with dedicated personnel as I feel they had got a good handle on the areas of work we covered.

SDR - I am happy with the support I get so I have no issues.

- 7.2 Members were not consulted as part of this review as it is recognised that the service currently provided does need to improve. This is an objective for 2015 and the lead up to the elections in May of that year. It is hoped that Resources Scrutiny Panel will be involved in developing ways in which we can engage with members to improve our service to them.

- 7.3 Turning again to the original objective behind the creation of the Corporate Support Team:

To increase efficiency, minimise cost, increase resilience and the quality of service offered.

- 7.4 Management of the Corporate Support Team have sought to increase efficiency and resilience by up-skilling staff so that they can carry out dual roles and cover during times of absence. More streamlined processes have also been developed, which are documented in a procedure library. It might be argued that the efficiency of senior officers has been affected because of the expectation that they will

carry out certain functions such as light printing and minute-taking at non SLA meetings.

- 7.5 The cost of the previous service has been minimised due to the merger of two existing teams. Savings have been achieved in resources and process efficiencies and there is still scope for further efficiencies. The total saving for 2014/15 onwards is £32,300; this takes account of redundancy and temporary staff costs.
- 7.6 The quality of service is improving constantly as we listen to customer feedback and embrace new methods of working. The team strive to deliver excellence within the confines of the SLA and within current resource allocation.

8. THE FUTURE

- 8.1 We recognise that the service is constantly evolving to meet the demands of the organisation. At the outset, we agreed that we would rotate staff in order to increase their knowledge of the business. However, the frequent changes to the establishment mean that this is no longer feasible at the end of the first year. It is therefore suggested that we continue with our existing structure until the end of 2014 to allow for staff to settle into their roles and to allow for the increased workload around the Parliamentary and Local elections.
- 8.2 In terms of addressing future needs, the next stage in our service delivery plan includes:
- Better support for members including those with specific needs.
 - Upskilling staff to provide better executive support within the confines of the SLA.
 - Taking on responsibility for implementing and managing a new complaints process, including the Social Care element of the process
 - An Investment in better software for the elections process and democratic services.
 - Monitoring of printer and postage usage to provide better statistical analysis for future budget setting.
 - The introduction of an improvement scheme 'You say – we did'.

9. RISK MANAGEMENT

RISK	IMPACT	COMMENTS
Time	Low	The team is already in existence; this report provides a progress update and invites comments on the future delivery of this service.
Viability	Low	The Council is required to demonstrate openness and transparency in all areas of its business and this process operates within the agreed principals.
Finance	Low	There are no direct financial implications arising from this report unless a change in current resources

		is considered.
Profile	Low	There is likely to be very limited public interest in the content of this report.
Equality and Diversity	Low	Minimal impact

Background Papers

None.

Report Author

Diane Baker

Tel No: (01572) 722577

e-mail: enquiries@rutland.gov.uk

Corporate Support Team – Service Level Agreement
January 2014 – December 2014

Introduction:

The purpose of this Service Level Agreement (SLA) is to define the services provided by the Corporate Support Team, which comprises the former Democratic Services and Support Teams, and to clarify the respective responsibilities of the team and its customers.

This agreement sets out:

- The services to be provided by the Corporate Support Team;
- The standards the Corporate Support Team aim to achieve in providing a quality, professional and fit for purpose service to its customers; and
- A mechanism for resolving any issues in the delivery of this service.

The Corporate Support Team's role is to support the Senior Management Team (SMT), Elected Members, Heads of Service and external customers in delivering specific services as outlined below:

Function and description:	<p>Meetings Administration -</p> <p>The Corporate Support Team will administer the formal process of consideration, decision-making and scrutiny of Council business through meetings or the Council, Cabinet, Scrutiny Panels, Committees, Working Groups/Parties and other <i>fora</i>.</p>
Service Delivered:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing advice to customers on the democratic process. • Compiling and despatching agendas and accompanying reports in accordance with legislative requirements and timescales. • Allocating report numbers for report authors. • Advising report authors on compliance with corporate formats and timescales. • Advising report authors on compliance with the Council's Constitution, including the Forward Plan. • Advising on public access to information. • Preparing draft minutes/records of decisions for officer comment and publishing the agreed versions prior to confirmation at the next meeting of the body concerned. • Maintaining a log of delegated decisions and making this available on the Council's website.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining a list of formal Registers and contact details for Elected Members and Proper Officers. • Maintaining information relating to Parish Councils and associated meetings and arranging liaison meetings when required.
Timescales:	<p>The Corporate Support Team:</p> <p>will respond to requests relating to reports or other agenda items within one working day.</p> <p>will respond to requests for other non-urgent advice within three working days.</p> <p>will issue draft minutes within five working days following the meeting, or within two working days in respect of Cabinet records of decisions.</p> <p>will update records of information within one working day of receipt and will notify customers accordingly within the same timescale.</p>
Function and Description:	<p>Forward Plan -</p> <p>The Corporate Support Team will support customers by maintaining one Forward Plan for all Council business.</p>
Service Delivered:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Producing one Forward Plan in a format accessible to all stake-holders. • Updating the Forward Plan per the agreed timetable and publishing it in line with statutory requirements. • Providing advice on guidance to customers on the inclusion of items on the Forward Plan.
Timescales:	<p>The Corporate Support Team:</p> <p>will update the Forward Plan within one day of receipt of the information.</p> <p>will provide advice and guidance within three days of request of information.</p>
Function and Description:	<p>Administrative support to SMT and Heads of Service –</p> <p>The Corporate Support Team will provide the following administrative support to key officers within the organisation. A list of meetings that may require regular support has been agreed. However, this list is not exhaustive. Any new meeting to be added to this schedule should be discussed with the Head of Corporate Governance to ensure resources are available.</p>
Service Delivered:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting management, including the

	<p>arrangement, preparation/circulation of agenda, minute/note taking and production of such within agreed timescales providing access to Calendars is arranged and electronic meeting requests are handled by the officer within 24 hours of receipt. Please note: We are only able to type the minutes for meetings that are attended/clerked by an Administration Assistant/Support Officer (See list at Appendix B) - where capacity allows assistance with typing notes to other meetings will be considered on a case by case basis.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outlook Diary Management – to include scheduling meetings and appointments as required, issuing and tracking invites and reminders, providing links within meetings to relevant documentation. • Handling of telephone calls i.e. receiving and making on behalf of officer. • Handling of emails i.e. receiving and sending on behalf of officer and management of Outlook emails as directed whilst on leave. • Document production i.e. creation/printing/scanning on behalf of officer. Large Volumes – please see guidance below. • Updating and Maintaining Directorate Forward Plan. • General administrative support for raising purchase orders and goods receipting on Agresso. • Rail ticket bookings • Formatting documents for internal and statutory meetings and inspections. • Updating Structure Charts. • Handling of incoming and outgoing mail. • Complete Training Request Forms and booking places on courses/conferences. • Scheduling Portfolio Holder Briefings. • Chasing Report authors to ensure deadlines are met and reports are signed off appropriately before placing in appropriate meeting folder. • Checking 18pt reports meet the required standard and amending as necessary – more complex tables and financial graphs should be undertaken by the service. • Support with Recruitment and Interview Arrangements. • Support with statutory Departmental/Area Inspections of the Peoples Directorate including provision of rooms, timetable, co-ordination,
--	---

	<p>preparing documents for Inspection, liaising with Internal and external individuals/agencies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receipt and registering of referrals. • Large scale printing jobs should be directed through Reprographics – please bear in mind the necessity of printing large volumes with regard to RCC paper light policy. • Registration and Monitoring of Complaints. • Inputting Sickness onto Agresso for Directors/Heads of Service.
Timescales:	<p>The Corporate Support Team:</p> <p>will produce minutes/notes of internal meetings within five days of the meeting.</p> <p>will produce documents within three days of request.</p> <p>Will book rail tickets within one day of request.</p>
Function and Description:	<p>Postal Service –</p> <p>The internal Post Room service provides a central incoming and outgoing mail service for all customers.</p>
Service Delivered:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening, date stamping and sorting of post. • Ensuring that any post placed in the outgoing external/internal trays is delivered to the Post Room by 15.30 (15.00 on Friday) for issue. • Notifying customers of any anticipated disruption to service. • Collection and Delivery of DX Mail
Timescales:	<p>The Corporate Support Team:</p> <p>will sort, open and deliver incoming mail by 11.00 each working day.</p> <p>will register all cheques and cash received into Ledgers and deliver to CST daily.</p> <p>will adhere to the correct procedure for secure receipt and recording of documents in relation to Benefits and Council Tax items.</p> <p>will ensure mail for external despatch is franked and presented for collection by Royal Mail by 16.30 Monday to Friday.</p>
Function and Description:	<p>Reprographic Service –</p> <p>The internal Reprographics Service provides a central facility of printing, binding, guillotining, heavy-duty hole punching, laminating, folding and inserting documents</p>

	into large volume mailings.
Service Delivered:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Networked printing and copying. • Maintenance of printers/copiers at all office locations. • Ordering and maintaining print stocks, consumables and paper, including arranging delivery by print and paper suppliers. • Undertaking minor repairs, installing consumables and machine parts for printers/copiers. • Requesting service engineer attendance. • Undertaking meter readings for printers/copiers. • Providing quotations for internal printing tasks. • Advising on cost effective methods of <i>ad hoc</i> or bulk printing tasks. • Providing services to external bodies on a fee basis.
Timescales:	<p>The Corporate Support team:</p> <p>will place orders for consumables and stock for delivery within three days of receipt of the request.</p> <p>will undertake minor repairs immediately (where possible) on receipt of the request and will arrange subsequent engineer cover if required within one working day.</p> <p>will provide quotations/advice on ad hoc print tasks within three working days.</p> <p>will provide large and or complex print jobs within three days.</p> <p>will provide printing for collection within 24 hours of receipt for urgent requests and 72 hours for standard or other period as agreed by the requestor.</p> <p>will provide quotations/advice in respect of printing/copying tasks within three working days or other period as agreed by the requestor.</p>
Function and Description:	<p>Elections and Electoral Registration</p> <p>The Corporate Support Team is responsible for ensuring that the Council, the Returning Officer and the Electoral Registration Officer meet their statutory obligations by supporting the Chief Executive and Head of Corporate Governance in administering the electoral process.</p>
Service Delivered:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining the Register of Electors, including

	<p>registration of individual electors, annual canvass of electors and the publication of statutory information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing the integrity of the process, including liaison with regulatory bodies and other agencies. • Administering elections for the UK Parliament, the European Parliament, the Council and Parish Council, Police and Crime Commissioner Elections and referendums as and when required. • Providing training to staff who are involved in the electoral process.
Timescales:	<p>The Corporate Support Team:</p> <p>will maintain the Register of Electors within one working day of receipt of the application.</p> <p>Will provide training to staff involved in elections within two weeks of polling day.</p>
Function and Description:	<p>Information Governance –</p> <p>The Corporate Support Team provides administrative support to customers dealing with Freedom of Information (FOI), Environmental Information Regulations (EIR) and Data Protection Act (DPA) requests.</p>
Service Delivered:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing advice on all aspects of the above legislation, including corporate compliance. • Developing corporate policies and undertaking training to ensure all stake-holders are familiar with statutory requirements. • Acknowledging and registering all requests received under the legislation and managing them through the internal process until the information can be lawfully released, or withheld if appropriate. • Maintaining statistics in respect of the Council's performance in responding to such requests. • Publishing and circulating information on a period basis to stake-holders.
Timescales:	<p>The Corporate Support Team:</p> <p>will acknowledge each request for information within one working day of receipt.</p> <p>will process each request for information within the statutory timeframe i.e. 20 working days for FOI and EIR requests and 40 days for DPA subject access requests. FOI Internal Reviews will be processed within</p>

	<p>40 days of receipt and other DPA requests will be processed within five working days of receipt.</p> <p>will provide advice and guidance on information governance within three working days of receipt.</p>
Function and Description:	Other <i>Ad Hoc</i> Services -
Service Delivered:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advice and guidance on ethical standards for Elected Members, Parish Councils and members of the public – this includes supporting the Conduct Committee. • Administrative and record keeping services for burials at Oakham Cemetery. • Photocopying, filing, document management, typing/formatting and maintaining stationery supplies. • Register all complaints and allocate a Unique Reference Number. Remind services of response dates and monitor adherence. • Provision of a Tender Officer to be responsible for the receipt, recording and safe keeping of Tenders received by post in accordance with Part 11 of the RCC Constitution.
Timescales:	<p>The Corporate Support Team:</p> <p>will provide advice and guidance on ethical standards and probity within three working days of receipt.</p> <p>will update records for burials within three working days of receipt.</p> <p>will undertake photocopying within one working day of receipt.</p>
<p><i>Any variation of service delivery timescales or issues arising as a result of this Agreement should be discussed with the Head of Corporate Governance.</i></p>	
Our expectations:	<p>The Corporate Support Team invites our customers to present full and accurate information when requesting service.</p> <p>We also invite customers to respond to email requests quickly to ensure we meet our timescale obligations. Calendars should be accessible and emails should be acknowledged within one working day to allow the Corporate Support Team to fully meet the support needs of our customers.</p> <p>All requests for general support should be made by email to the Team Coordinator at corporatesupport@rutland.gov.uk</p>

	<p>Requests pertaining to electoral services should be made to the Electoral Services Officer at elections@rutland.gov.uk</p> <p>Any issue concerning the provision of service should be addressed to the Head of Corporate Governance in the first instance.</p> <p><u>All requests for service will be acknowledged on receipt.</u></p>
--	---

A Large Print or Braille Version of this Report is available upon request – Contact 01572 722577.