

# GROWTH, INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESOURCES

## SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

13 June 2019

### BUSINESS SUPPORT REVIEW

#### Report of the Strategic Director for Resources

Strategic Aim:	Sound Financial and Workforce Planning	
Exempt Information	No	
Cabinet Member(s) Responsible:	Mr O Hemsley, Leader and Portfolio Holder for Rutland One Public Estate & Growth, Tourism & Economic Development, Communications, Resources (other than Finance)	
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Ward Councillors	N/A	

#### DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Panel notes the report

## 1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 'Business support' is used to describe the administrative assistance given to front line staff. This support is varied and includes general office management, answering phones, speaking with clients, clerical work (including maintaining records and entering data), supporting meetings, processing financial transactions and a variety of other tasks.
- 1.2 This report updates Councillors on the work of the Business Support team over one year on from its establishment in February 2018.

## 2 BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

### 2.1 *Background to Business Support*

- 2.1.1 In July 2016, it was agreed that a review should be undertaken into the administrative support (which was located within service teams) provided

throughout the Council. It was identified that:

- administrative tasks were being completed disparately by teams throughout the Council not enabling efficient service delivery;
- there was no resilience if officers were absent;
- officers were not enhancing their skills;
- there was thought to be duplication of processes, procedures and work streams which could be reduced if a centralised service was created; and
- the existing model did not offer clear career progression and encourage staff retention.

2.1.2 The objectives of the review were to create a Business Support service that was:

- Consistent across the council;
- Efficient and robust;
- Resilient to change and differing working practices;
- Offered a well-defined career path; and
- Offered greater job depth and variation.

2.1.3 Further to an internal review, a detailed implementation and change management plan was developed to implement the following changes:

- Corporate Support would be expanded as a Business Support Team to support the general administrative functions identified through the review. A Business Support Manager would be appointed to manage this team and take forward the service improvement work.
- That the democratic functions of Corporate Support would be separated into a Governance Team where there would be a stronger emphasis on support to the scrutiny process, Councillor support and stronger clerk support/advice to committees. A Governance Manager would be appointed to manage this team and fulfil the Statutory Scrutiny Officer role.
- Executive Officer posts would be created to meet the changing needs of SMT and the Council.
- From the original pool of staff in scope of the review, a new Business Support Team would be created. These were posts that were predominantly administrative roles. Some roles were excluded that had specialised knowledge, were technical roles or were more service delivery roles such as HR, CST or roles within satellite centres (Visions/Jules House).

## **2.2 *Implementing the outcomes from the review***

2.2.1 The new arrangements began on 1 February 2018. On 1 February a new support function was established comprising three sub teams:

- An Executive Support team - comprising two Executive Officers supporting SMT
- A Governance Team - four staff delivering democratic and member support to the Council
- A Business Support Hub - providing support to Council directorates.

2.2.2 Since 2018 various recruitment exercises have been undertaken to get staff in place. A new Business Support Manager (BSM) role - responsible for Business Support and Executive Support - started in February 2018. The Executive Support team and Governance teams are now fully staffed with officers with the right skills relevant to their new roles.

### **3 12 MONTHS ON – WHAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED?**

#### **3.1 Overview**

3.1.1 This section focuses on Business Support and Executive Support (the Governance team is now separate) and looks at progress made. It highlights:

- Customers views about Business Support;
- Staff views about working in Business Support;
- Director/Business Support Managers views about what has been achieved and ongoing challenges; and
- The current financial position.

#### **3.2 Customers views**

3.2.1 Business Support customers include Heads of Services/Managers who receive direct support and officers within service teams.

3.2.2 We have re-run a Customer Survey we undertook 12 months ago to assess views about whether the service has improved. The results (shown in the table) were as follows:

- Overall level of 'responsiveness' is deemed high i.e. support is flexible to meet need;
- The centralisation of Business Support has had a positive impact for most teams;
- Most teams express confidence in Business Support to deliver; and
- The direct support provided to individual managers is much better than before. In particular comments from Heads of Service have been very positive.

3.2.3 Alongside the above comments, the BSM meets with managers regularly to ensure needs are being met. Outside of the Survey, Business Support has received many compliments from service areas for the work they do and how they

will often go beyond what is expected to deliver.

3.2.4 Executive support (support to SMT) was not covered directly by the survey but feedback from SMT is very positive.

Question	Result 2018 %	Results 2019 %
How would you currently rate Business Support Overall in terms of Service Delivery: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extremely responsive/very responsive</li> <li>Somewhat responsive</li> <li>Not so responsive</li> <li>Not at all responsive</li> </ul>	65.21 30.43 4.35 0	90.91 4.55 4.55 0
Has the change to Business Support had a positive impact for you/your service: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yes</li> <li>No</li> </ul>	45.45 54.55	66.67 33.33
Are you clear on how workflow is managed within Business Support, and who to go to for assistance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extremely/very clear</li> <li>Somewhat clear</li> <li>Not so clear</li> <li>Not at all clear</li> </ul>	43.48 21.74 13.04 21.74	50.00 36.36 13.64 0
Do you feel confident when making a request to Business Support that it will be done to the required standard: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extremely confident</li> <li>Very confident</li> <li>Somewhat confident</li> <li>Not so confident</li> <li>Not at all confident</li> </ul>	13.04 43.48 30.43 13.04 0.00	27.27 45.45 18.18 4.55 4.55

### 3.3 Staff views

3.3.1 12 months ago Business Support staff were asked for feedback on the first quarter following the implementation of Business Support.

3.3.2 Latest feedback from staff is that:

- They enjoy supporting other parts of the Council and get a lot of satisfaction out of this;
- They have concerns about their capacity to take on new work;
- They want to develop new skills but opportunities have been limited due to workload, periodic vacancies and team changes; and
- They are receptive to change and have identified areas to investigate (e.g. where there are opportunities to improve/change practice).

### **3.4 Directorate views**

3.4.1 The profile of Business Support in the Council, the way it is managed and delivered with a focus on 'improvement' is changing. There have been many improvements but we remain ambitious to do even more. The existing arrangements will help deliver this.

#### **3.4.2 *Management and supervision***

Improving management of teams to drive efficiencies and deliver a higher quality service was a key priority. Within the overall budget, there has been investment in management which has facilitated this:

- The BSM has a remit to focus on improving working practices, delivering efficiencies and high quality support;
- The BSM has two Team Co-ordinators for the Business Support Hubs to strengthen and increase capacity;
- The BSM spends time talking to internal customers, understanding current support requirements and future needs;
- A Business Improvement Board is in place comprising Finance, IT and Projects Officers to work with managers on tackling performance issues, action planning and identifying training needs; and
- The management of the Support Hub by the BSM and two Team Co-ordinators has also allowed service managers in Directorates to focus attention on service delivery.

#### **3.4.3 *Training and development***

To ensure that the Business Support staff have the skills and knowledge to carry out their roles the following training has taken place:

- Microsoft package training – Basic, intermediate and advanced sessions on Outlook, Word and Excel have been carried out (in conjunction with Rutland Adult Learning Service (RALS)). Business Support staff identified their training needs with the support of their Team Co-ordinators and completed the relevant training sessions.
- Microsoft TEAMS training – to ensure that Business Support is able to use the most up to date software the team are undergoing training and then will be testing Microsoft TEAMS software. Business Support will provide feedback to IT on its effectiveness to the view of potential rollout to all staff in the future.
- Some training requirements of individual Business Support staff are identified and addressed immediately. Examples of this training are:
  - i) Agresso - RCC finance system
  - ii) Liquidlogic – Social care case management system

### iii) FixedMyStreet – Highways report management system

#### 3.4.4 *Delivery of support*

The Places and Resources Hub are located together and managed centrally by a Team Co-ordinator. The Peoples' Hub is split into Children's and Adults in order to preserve the confidential nature of the information they handle. Both teams are located within their own offices which was not the case pre 1 February 2018.

#### 3.4.5 The pooling of resources into Hubs means in theory:

- when staff members have been absent (and duties would not have been undertaken) they are now covered by another member of their designated Hub;
- reliance to undertake tasks/support is no longer on specific individuals but the Hubs themselves giving greater flexibility;
- knowledge gained from working with service teams and Directorates has not been 'lost' but is now spreading across the Hubs; and
- there is continuity of support to teams and Directorates.

#### 3.4.6 The team are well on the way to delivering these benefits. In particular, in some areas there is now greater resilience as cover is now available.

- Jules reception;
- Transport administration;
- Freedom of Information (FOI) administration;
- Highways Administration;
- Admiral Nurse service administration; and
- Support for SMT by Executive Officers.

#### 3.4.7 *Delivering improvement*

Business Support resource is limited at a time when the need for support is increasing. One of the key priorities for the Team is to ask:

- What can be stopped - tasks that do not add value or duplicate other processes
- What can be changed - to ensure processes are 'lean' and make best use of systems
- What might better sit elsewhere – to ensure tasks are done in the right place or by the right method e.g. accessed online

3.4.8 This priority has led to some changes below:

- Post Room duties – Incoming post is routed direct to individuals, resulting in a significant time saving and ensures compliance in-line with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR);
- Petty Cash – Business Support now have a Procurement Card which has replaced petty cash. This has streamlined the process, makes it more transparent and reduces security risk of cash;
- Booking of Rail tickets – Booking of rail tickets is now restricted to Business Support only which has resulted in a time and cost saving. In one month the team saved £500 through ticket purchases.
- Reprographics Office – Now unmanned with the service running remotely. Business Support hours have been redeployed back into the team to provide resilience to other services.
- New admin demand - The creation of the Admiral Nurse Service in 2018 (initially 1 Admiral Nurse) has resulted in an additional admin support requirement for the Adults Business Support team to provide. This service has been a success, and now the Council employs 4 Admiral Nurses which has again increased the support required from Business Support.
- Digital First and Printing - One of the issues raised through the Board was the amount of printing that was done by Business Support which was considered unnecessary. This issue was pivotal in the Council's decision to reduce the number of printers and kick off a wider campaign to go Digital First and reduce printing as far as possible. As Support teams are asked to do printing they are in a good position to challenge whether this is necessary.

### **3.5 FINANCIAL POSITION**

3.5.1 The cost of the Business Support, Executive Support and Governance is £936k for c27 FTEs. The cost of the team is the same as it was pre the transfer. The main changes include investment, funded by vacancies, in:

- Business Support management (see 3.4.2);
- Executive Support; and
- Specialist Governance Officers.

3.5.2 Whilst no direct staff savings have been made, the team have absorbed new duties equivalent to one FTE (c£35k) and are contributing to wider savings initiatives such as printing and train costs.

## **4 CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS**

4.1 There is no doubt that 12 months on, very good progress has been made. Against a backdrop of limited resources, increasing demands for support and greater expectations, the Business Support teams work must be properly planned and focused in areas where it can add real value.

- 4.2 Following the completion of the Managers annual survey, we are undertaking a review/deep dive into the Adults and Children's Business Support teams functions. This review is to ensure that the resources available are used effectively.
- 4.3 We have started this process with staff workshops, led by the Strategic Director for Resources and Business Support Manager. The workshops and following analysis of the work that the teams are undertaking will provide us with a granular picture of all elements of tasks completed by the Business Support teams allowing us to provide a streamlined service to our customers and to maximise efficiencies. The new Business Support Coordinator for People joined in May. Their primary role is to manage the Business Support Team and drive the review forward to deliver required changes.

## **5 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 5.1 There are no additional background papers to the report.

## **6 APPENDICES**

- 6.1 None

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