

Committee:	Date:
Corporate Services Committee	01.03.2023
Subject: Draft high-level Business Plan 2023/2024 of the Comptroller & City Solicitors Department.	Public
Report of: Michael Cogher	For decision
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Summary

This report presents for approval the high-level Business Plan of the Comptroller & City Solicitors Department (C&CS) for 2023/24.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- i. Note the factors taken into consideration in compiling the C&CS Department Business Plan; and
- ii. Approve, subject to the incorporation of any changes sought by this Committee, the departmental Business Plan 2023/24.

Main Report

Background

1. As part of the new framework for corporate and business planning, departments were asked to produce standardised high-level, 2-side Business Plans for the first time in 2017 for the 2018/19 year. Members generally welcomed these high-level plans for being brief, concise, focused, and consistent statements of the key ambitions and objectives for every department.
2. For 2023/24, the high-level Business Plan has been further evolved to add more narrative and improve readability. The Business Plan now incorporates the C&CS TOM departmental structure changes implemented in 2021. As a high-level plan, this document does not capture the granularity of departmental work but gives the overall picture of departmental activity, customer feedback, trends where applicable and direction of travel.

Draft final high-level Business Plan for 2023/24

3. This report presents, at Appendix 1, the draft final high-level Business Plan for 2023/24 for the C&CS Department.

The C&CS Department is an enabling service that delivers legal and data protection advice, governance, and support to the City its constituent departments and institutions.

The outward facing C&CS service priorities are determined by the City's major corporate projects and programmes and by client department activities in support of the Corporate Plan outcomes. Statutory requirements also determine the priorities at both strategic and operational levels.

Internal C&CS service priorities are determined by inward facing corporate priorities and required standards such as Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion, by key service risks such as the need to recruit and retain the appropriate levels of legal competence and expertise, by service KPI's where these require corrective action for example customer satisfaction levels, from the outputs of the annual staff survey that require redress, and by the service ethos of quality, professionalism and continuous improvement.

The C&CS service priorities were developed by the Senior Management Team based on discussions with service managers, knowledge of corporate and client priorities, feedback from C&CS staff both via the staff survey, issues raised via staff communication channels and by knowledge of the changes in sector priorities.

The C&CS local risk budget is largely spent on employees, a key service objective is to deliver most of the legal advice and support in-house, this model delivers legal support at much lower cost compared to outsourcing to external firms and has been further supported by recruiting fixed-term lawyers with the necessary expertise on specific projects. Legal work is outsourced only when the in-house team lacks the capacity to manage large volumes of work or where the in-house team lacks the necessary niche expertise.

Service performance is measured by seven key performance measures using a quality and risk framework, the KPI's are benchmarked with other London Boroughs Legal Alliance in-house legal teams to ensure that the department is in step with current KPI's. Efficiency is measured using a chargeable hours KPI, quality is measured by compliance with the Law Society's LEXCEL quality standard by complaints against caseload and by the responses to the department's customer satisfaction survey, staff motivation and engagement is measured using the outputs from the staff survey. It is fully acknowledged that there is always room for improvement and the service seeks to continually improve its services based on customer feedback.

C&CS participates in the annual London Boroughs Legal Alliance benchmark which includes fourteen in-house local authority legal teams and measures key metrics such as net cost of the service, hourly rates, salary levels, cost of externalised legal support etc. C&CS analyses the results to the benchmark to measure its value for money performance with the acknowledgement that C&CS has a significantly greater commercial focus particularly in property and planning work compared to other London local authority legal teams and this generates an external income stream which is closely monitored.

Operational Property Asset Utilisation

C&CS is an office-based service currently located on the fifth floor of the Guildhall North Wing. The current office design is of traditional configuration, a number of workstations were de-commissioned during the Covid19 pandemic to facilitate safe social distancing as staff returned to the office resulting in a reduced number of functional workstations, the de-commissioned workstations have not been reinstated due to funding limitations. Revised home working arrangements and lower levels of attendance in the office have reduced demand for office-based workstations. These factors have resulted in an office space that is only partly utilised, a detailed analysis of occupancy levels and a revised office layout design is required to address this underutilisation, C&CS are keen to collaborate with City Surveyors to determine future office space design as part of the

operational property review subject to the outcomes of the proposed Guildhall Refurbishment Programme.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

C&CS contributes to corporate outcomes by providing expert high quality legal advice and support to facilitate the delivery of these outcomes.

Security implications

None.

Financial implications

None at present subject to the outcomes of the operational property review.

Public sector equality duty

None

Resourcing implications

None.

Conclusion

This report presents the high-level Business Plan for 2023/24 of the Comptroller & City Solicitors Department for Members to consider and approve.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Final draft high-level Business Plan 2023/24

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