

Committee(s): Corporate Services Committee	Dated: 21 February 2024
Subject: Draft High-Level Business Plan 2024/25 – Comptroller & City Solicitors Department.	Public
Which outcomes in the City Corporation’s Corporate Plan does this proposal aim to impact directly?	All
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	N
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain’s Department?	N/A
Report of: Michael Cogher, Comptroller & City Solicitor	For Decision
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Summary

This report presents for approval the high-level Business Plan for the Comptroller & City Solicitors Department (C&CS) for 2024/25.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- i. Note the factors taken into consideration in compiling the C&CS Business Plan; and
- ii. Approve, subject to the incorporation of any changes sought by this Committee, the departmental Business Plan 2024/25 at Appendix 1.

Main Report

Background

1. As part of the new framework for corporate and business planning, departments were asked to produce standardised high-level, two-page 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 with consistent statements of the key ambitions and objectives for every department.
2. For 2024/25, the high-level Business Plan has further evolved to describe the funding, people resources and KPI’s associated with each priority workstream. 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 the direction of travel.

Draft final high-level Business Plan for 2024/25

3. This report presents, at Appendix 1, the draft final high-level Business Plan 2024/25 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 goals and 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 most recent 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 C&CS Senior Leadership 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.

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 customer satisfaction survey, staff motivation and engagement is measured using the outputs from the staff survey. It is 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 and competitiveness 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.

The services delivered by C&CS are by necessity cross cutting as they are provided for all the City's departments, institutions, and the City of London Police. The City's departmental Business Plans will be analysed to plan future C&CS resourcing.

4. Operational Property Assets Utilisation

Aligned with the requirements of Standing Order 56, a utilisation assessment of the corporate office space occupied by C&CS was undertaken in 2023.

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 and lacks the efficiency of space utilisation that could be achieved by a redesign, a workstation usage assessment was undertaken to measure occupancy levels, several workstations were de-commissioned during the Covid19 pandemic to facilitate safe social distancing, these workstations have not been reinstated due to funding limitations.

C&CS staff are hybrid workers the return to office-based working for a minimum of two days per week though the analysis of office attendance revealed that the average is three days per week, with an average of occupancy of 53% and a maximum on any one day of 63%.

The reduced number of functional workstations combined with increased office attendance has resulted in a shortage of available workstations within team areas on days when office attendance levels are high. Greater efficiency of office space utilisation could be achieved with a re-designed office space, there is currently no central funding for office space re-design. 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. As a short-term solution to ease the pressure C&CS have reinstated a small number of workstations funded from the C&CS local risk budget.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

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

Security implications

None.

Financial implications

Small impact on local risk budget for workstation reinstatement this will be managed within budget.

Public sector equality duty

The department has an Equality and Diversity Working Group that delivers pragmatic outputs and participates in staff networks.

Resourcing implications

None.

Conclusion

This report presents the high-level Business Plan for 2024/25 of the C&CS Department for Members to consider and approve.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Final C&CS high-level Business Plan 2024/25

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