

S5. The Corporate Plan 2020-2022 – Innovation

The committee considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Housing Services presenting performance information on the Innovation priority of the Corporate Plan 2020-2022.

This report completed the first reporting cycle for the three priorities of communities, enterprise and innovation. An overview report would be presented to committee in June.

The innovation priority was focussed on transforming services through the Council of the Future change programme. The key projects were:-

- Strategic Property Review (Priority Project)
- Digital Communities (Priority Project)
- Council HQ & Arts Centre
- Fit for the Future
- Rock Solid Technology
- Automation
- Integrated Resource Management System (IRMS)
- Transformation of Customer & Business Support
- Analogue to Digital Telecare
- CCTV

The report provided progress on each of the 7 key actions set out in the Corporate Plan and provide an update on the two priority projects, Digital Communities and the Strategic Property Review. While the former was in progress the latter was overdue.

Six indicators set out in the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LBGF) linked to the Innovation priority. Performance in 5 of these was among the top 8 in Scotland :-

- Support services as a percentage of gross expenditure.
- The cost per dwelling of collecting Council Tax.
- Sickness absence days per teacher.
- Percentage of invoices sampled that were paid within 30 days.
- Proportion of properties receiving superfast broadband.

In regard to sickness absence days per employee the Council's performance compared broadly to the majority of Councils.

Following a question in regard to the Headquarters and Arts Centre site option appraisal and in particular whether the negotiations were associated with 'Block 4' Douglas Duff advised that the negotiations were in regard to the site for the future headquarters and Arts Centre. The Council was in discussion with a number of landowners and initial dialog was positive. He anticipated that an update report would be submitted to Council in May.

The committee turned to CHS20 INN-03 - encourage and enable collaborative working by providing our workforce with the right tools and

sought more detail on the further checks that were being undertaken to upgrade laptops with outdated operating systems. Karen Algie explained that the work related to the Windows 7 operating system and that all laptops which had this system had now been identified and would be replaced/upgraded.

The committee noted that there had been a 'naming competition' for Block 4 in Larbert and that the fit out was anticipated to be completed in summer/late 2021. The acting Director was asked why a building that was intended as temporary accommodation for staff would be named and asked how long it would be utilised. Mr Duff explained that Council had previously determined that Block 4 would be an interim solution and significant investment had been made in the asset to make it fit for purpose. The building would serve for a number of years so it was important that it had a proper presence for staff. The naming competition was an opportunity for staff to buy into the project and their building. The exercise had been completed and the Group Leaders had been advised. It was likely that the outcome would be announced the following week. The length of the temporary arrangement would be guided by the further work being carried out on the HQ/Arts Centre – once Council had settled on its preferred location it would be possible to determine office requirements. Working practices had been impacted by the pandemic, in particular the move to home working and this would impact on the assessment of office needs going forward. For example the standard of 0.6 desks to people would be likely to reflect home working practices.

The committee noted that in 2019/20 sickness absence days had increased slightly compared to 2018/19 (from 10.43 to 11.64) and asked whether this would increase in 2020/21 given the impact of covid-19. Karen Algie stated that there would be a number of absences due to Covid-19 – however, there had been a reduction in the number of non-Covid-19 related absences in 2020/21. This pattern had been seen across Scotland and was possibly due to the benefits of working from home. Following a further question, Ms Algie confirmed that absence figures for 2020/21 could be broken down to show Covid and non-Covid related absence.

Decision

The Scrutiny Committee noted the performance of the Council in relation to innovation.