

Legal & Democratic Services

Portfolio Holder Update 18th October 2016

Licensing

- As members will see from the papers we are now less than 2 weeks away from London Borough of Bexley becoming a full member of the Licensing Partnership, although our Licensing Manager, Claire Perry, has been managing the Bexley Licensing team since 1st September. The Licensing Partnership will start to process Bexley applications from the 31st October and this will result in operational savings for each of the four partner authorities, with SDC expected to save £15,000 during 2017/18. This has been an immense project and to celebrate we are having an afternoon tea for selected members and officers from each of the partner authorities on **Thursday, 10th November 2016 from 3 pm – 4 pm in the conference room**. L&DSAC committee members are very welcome to attend but please RSVP to sarah.carter@sevenoaks.gov.uk.
- At the same time the Licensing Partnership continues to deliver a record performance (all performance indicators met for the first 6 months of this year and last year). In addition, work is on-going to make the licensing partnership more user friendly and efficient. Finally, the licensing committee continues to make good decisions with sub-committee decisions regularly upheld on appeal.
- Discussions are now on-going with the London Borough of Bromley who also wish to join the Licensing Partnership.

Legal & democratic services

- Welcome to Martin Goodman, our new Head of Legal & Democratic Services and Monitoring officer who joined the Council on 1st July 2016. Charlotte Sinclair has also been welcomed back from maternity leave. A new democratic services officer is also being recruited to replace David Lagzdins who joins the legal team as a fully qualified Solicitor.
- The legal team continues to provide legal support across the Council and its most notable successes since 1st July 2016 are set out in the table attached.
- A programme of additional training for members is being developed and Martin Goodman, in his role as monitoring officer, will be giving a brief presentation of recent advice by leading counsel on Disclosable Pecuniary Interests after November's Full Council. A members "useful contacts card" is almost complete.

- The democratic services team continues to be very busy attending at least two evenings meetings a week, managing Full Council, assisting with daytime meetings and briefings, processing Subject Access Requests under the Data Protection legislation and carrying out reviews of FOI requests.

Elections

- Since the last L&DSAC meeting the elections team have successfully administered 7 elections including the PCC election, the EU referendum and most recently the 3 town/district and county by-elections in Swanley.
- At the same time, the annual individual registration process (IER) continues with the new register being required to be published on-line on 1st December 2016.

Trading company

Over the last 6 months I have been working with the Finance Portfolio Holder, the Leader and First Flight recruitment company to recruit two non-executive directors specialising in finance and property to complete the Executive Board of the new trading company, Quercus 7. The full board will now comprise of Andrew Andreou, BSC, ACA (finance), John Tibbitts, Fellow (FCIOB), Quantity Surveyor (property), Adrian Rowbotham, Richard Wilson and Lesley Bowles. The two N.E.Ds bring considerable commercial and private sector finance and property experience and will start from 1st November 2016 with the first Board meeting being in early November.

Health & Safety

On the 6th October (World Mental Health Day) I attended a mental health in the workplace conference organised by West Kent Mind in Tunbridge Wells in conjunction with TW and T&M Borough Councils. Given that the annual cost to employers from mental health absences now stands at £30 billion, with 91 million days lost to mental health problems and an additional £15 billion being estimated to be lost every year due to employees with mental health issues being present in the work place, mental health issues are not something that employers can afford to ignore. However, on listening to the presentations, it was clear that SDC is well versed in these issues.

Governance

A Governance workshop took place on Monday, 10th November and those present voted for a formal recommendation to be put to the next Governance committee on 3rd November requesting an electoral review of Sevenoaks District Council. Members will also be aware that a consultation is on-going regarding the new Parliamentary boundaries.

Anna Firth, Portfolio Holder for Legal & Democratic Services