

MEETING

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE AND CONTRACTS COMMITTEE

DATE AND TIME

MONDAY 17TH DECEMBER, 2018

AT 7.00 PM

VENUE

HENDON TOWN HALL, THE BURROUGHS, LONDON NW4 4BG

Dear Councillors,

Please find enclosed the Responses to the submitted Public Questions.

Item No	Title of Report	Pages
1.	PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS (IF ANY)	3 - 8

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Public Comment(s)	
Request for a Public Comment has been received in relation to the following Agenda Item: (3 minutes per comment) Item 8 – Performance of Back office functions, Legal Services	Mr. John Dix

Public Questions

Question	Agenda Item	Raised by	Question Raised	Answer
1	7	Mr John Dix	The report says that the forecast for the CSG core contract fee has increased following the calculation of indexation which needs to be applied (£0.547m). Given that indexation is a defined contractual clause, why wasn't provision made for this indexation in the original budget?	Budget provision for inflationary increases is awarded through an in-year budget allocation process once the relevant inflation factors are known.
2	7	Mr John Dix	Please can you provide a breakdown of the historical unachievable income targets of £1.3m, where was the income due to be generated (e.g. from residents or from other local authorities), who set the targets and who has deemed them unachievable?	Unachievable income refers to where the council historically (in 2013) set a target for income for the CSG budget that is higher than the contractually guaranteed income from the CSG contract. This relates to schools traded services, print, and corporate programmes.
3	7	Mr John Dix	There is repeated reference to the need for a reduction in agency staff costs. However, in October the total agency costs for both the Matrix contract and the residual Comensura contract amounted to £1,778,816.83 and a year-end forecast of £18.9 million, £1 million	The council put in place a staffing panel to approve all agency placements except those in frontline Children's Social Care. Table 8a: Agency headcount (April - October 2018) within the quarterly performance report to Policy and Resources

AGENDA ITEM 5

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			more than last year. Please can you clarify how you are going to make those reductions and when they will happen?	on 11 th December 2018 highlighted that the agency headcount has reduced from 350 in April to 262 in October 2018.
4	8	Mr John Dix	The overspend in HB Law has been an on-going problem for years and mitigating actions have simply not materialised. Is there a single individual who has responsibility for controlling access to the HBLaw Budget, who is it, if there isn't a single individual, why not?	<p>The budget was set lower than spend from the start of the Inter Authority Agreement due to an optimistic income target. The Commercial Team has up to now overseen performance and overall spend, but demand is generated from the Service Departments. It is not possible to manage demand from the centre, and greater responsibility for budget management is now being placed within service areas. This includes ensuring that only nominated officers may instruct HBPL.</p> <p>The Business Planning report approved by Policy and Resources Committee on 11th December 2018 discussed an increased budget allocation in future years to resolve this structural budget deficit.</p>
5	8	Mr John Dix	Has anyone identified and quantified the types of legal requests that are going to HB Law and what are they?	The council's Chief Legal Advisor and Monitoring Officer has analysed the data provided by HBPL. A summary of the emerging issues is provided in paras 2.9 to 2.16 in the report.
6	8	Mr John Dix	If you discontinue advice-only work, is there a risk that mistakes will be made which could lead to greater costs in the long run?	Ensuring that only nominated officers may instruct HBPL will prevent unnecessary duplication. This will encourage the greater sharing of knowledge within the service and help reduce cost.
7	8	Mr John Dix	Given that legal spend has doubled at Cambridge Education in the first 6 months of this year, can you explain why the system of delegated authority to individual departments to commission HBLaw should continue	The increase in demand in Education Services is linked to increased representation at SEN tribunals, and is not a reflection of any contractual issues with HBPL. Placing greater responsibility for demand management within the service area helps ensure that emerging trends can be

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			without a fundamental rethink of how the contractual relationship with HBLaw?	picked up closer to the source of demand, and lead to quicker investigation and understanding at the appropriate level within the council.
8	9	Mr John Dix	I have called the council at least a dozen times in the last two months but I have never been asked to rate my phone call. Indeed one day I tried and failed to get through the automated telephone system on 6 occasions yet there was no opportunity to rate my satisfaction with the customer service system. Can you therefore clarify how the 89.4% satisfaction rate was calculated, what proportion of the calls are offered the opportunity to rate the call, what proportion of calls channelled through the virtual assistant given the opportunity to rate the call, and can you explain who compiles the satisfaction metrics?	The customer satisfaction KPI is calculated as a percentage of the feedback rated 'good' of all feedback via telephony, email and face-to-face access points combined. For the first two months of Q3 the Contact Centre received feedback from 15,089 customers via the telephony channel, which equated to 19% of all calls. The opportunity to provide feedback is offered to all customers on calls that are handled in the Contact Centre. Customers are offered the opportunity to be transferred to a survey and are only transferred if they consent. Once transferred, customers may still decide not to go ahead with the completion of the survey. The offer of the survey is monitored via performance management and quality control. On average for this year, out of offered surveys, up to 35% of the customers opt to leave feedback. Out of those, 74% on average complete the survey. The feedback is captured via a tool called Govmetric. The Contact Centre can look into individual cases to understand if there were issues with this process, if provided with full details of the caller.
9	9	Mr John Dix	Under budget forecasting metric can you clarify how this pass/fail rating is determined, who has been responsible for the improvement from fail to pass (is it Capita or is it the S151 Officer) and if this means that we can now trust the budget forecasts unlike last year?	This measure fails if the budget variance is greater than the previous month by a set dictated percentage, or, if the information is not provided within a set timetable. The previous fail rating was as a result of not achieving the timetable. The section 151 officer and his deputy have worked closely with the CSG team in order to put in place support

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				and appropriate challenge to ensure financial forecasts are robust.
10	9	Mr John Dix	Under savings implemented can you clarify how this pass/fail rating is determined, and how do you reconcile this rating with failure to deliver the savings in Interim & Agency staff and HBLaw?	This measure relates to the quality of evidence about whether the saving is being achieved rather than a measure of the delivery itself. It is determined by the Deputy Section 151 officer.
11	9	Mr John Dix	The DBS verification audits metric says that it is 100% and was 99.7% for 2017/18. How do you reconcile this rating with the limited assurance rating given to this function in the audit report of 22 November which indicated that these audit checks did not take place in 2017/18?	The KPI on DBS verification audits relates to DBS checks undertaken for staff recruited to the permanent workforce which is managed by CSG HR. The audit report of 22 nd November 2018 related to DBS verification audits of temporary workers only and checks undertaken within the temporary worker supply chain.
12	10	Mr John Dix	When was the Business Continuity and Exit Plan last updated?	Business continuity plans are continuously reviewed and updated. Business continuity plans are in place for all services, but particular attention has been paid to those for the IT service and the Customer Service Centre, based in Coventry. Updated exit plans were last provided in May 2018. These are being further developed as part of the contract review process.
13	10	Mr John Dix	Have copies of the written report summarising the results of the review/test have been reviewed and circulated to members of this committee?	The outcome of any business continuity plan review is incorporated in an updated version of the plan itself. A separate report is not produced.

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14	10	Mr John Dix	When was the Data Pack last updated and when is the next update due?	An updated Data Pack was provided to the council in May 2018. The next update is due in May 2019. More detailed and up to date information is being provided as part of the contract review process.
15	11	Mr John Dix	This problem has been on-going for several years. The report talks about a path to resolution but I could not see any mention of a guaranteed fixed date for resolution. Please can you clarify when this problem will be finally resolved and what confidence can I have that this will actually happen?	This should be fully resolved by April 2019, as per the action log, provided as part of the report.

