

## **Cabinet**

**19<sup>th</sup> February 2009**



## **LGR Update**

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### **Report of George Garlick, Chief Executive (Cabinet Portfolio Holder Councillor Simon Henig , Leader)**

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#### **Purpose of Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on the LGR programme.

#### **Current Position**

2. The remaining Corporate Directors have started this month so all 6 Directors are now in post. Similarly the majority of Heads of Service appointed before Christmas have also started providing a strong leadership cohort to take the new Council forward to Vesting Day and beyond.
3. The LGR programme is progressing well in ensuring the key components necessary to maintain service delivery from Vesting Day are in place and to create the foundations for the substantial change programme which will be undertaken over the next few years to deliver the objectives of a 'flagship' Council.

#### **Senior Management Structure**

4. Members have previously been briefed on the steps that the Council has taken regarding the Heads of Service posts that have not been filled. Adverts for the vacant posts will be placed shortly, with the interim arrangements to cover the period until a permanent replacement is found still being finalised.

#### **HR**

5. The deadline for the employee consultation on the next layer of management (Tier 4) passed on 6<sup>th</sup> February. Around 400 responses have been received with the key themes and concerns being addressed. A report detailing feedback will be circulated to Members and employees by 23<sup>rd</sup> February. The report will give clarifications on areas of perceived duplication or omissions. Any amendments to job descriptions as a result of the consultation will be re-issued.
6. Notifications of slot-ins and ring-fencing proposals will be issued to individual employees during the week commencing 23<sup>rd</sup> February. Employees will have the opportunity to query and/or appeal against these proposals. Once this exercise has been concluded, the appointment process will start.

7. In addition to the Tier 4 jobs the Council will also be recruiting to the staffing structure which will support the Area Action Partnerships in order that this important element of the new Council can be put in place as quickly as possible.
8. Work on the disaggregation of all existing staff to the relevant service groupings is nearing its conclusion. This work identifies which staff will be working in which service. For the majority of staff below Tier 4, it is likely that they will simply remain in their existing roles and will not have to go through any appointments process although this will need to be confirmed with Heads of Service.
9. The new Directors and Heads of Service are currently finalising their transition plans to ensure staff are aware of who they will report to on Vesting Day, their key responsibilities and the support arrangements in place. For most staff there will be no change to location or current responsibilities, reflecting the low key transition plan in place for Vesting Day.
10. In each of the district locations a senior manager will be identified who will be responsible for the location, for example ensuring health and safety issues are managed. In addition at each site during the early period of the new Council a member of the extended management team (Directors and Heads of Service) will be present to ensure staff can raise any service issues that they are able to resolve, or discuss any transition issues.

#### **Area Action Partnerships (AAP)**

11. With Cabinet agreeing the AAP model, including the functionality and role, work is now progressing towards the establishment of the AAPs with the Local Strategic Partnerships making way for the new arrangements which will be launched in April.

#### **Constitution Working Group**

12. A seminar for Members to run through the final Constitution has been requested and arrangements are currently being made to book this, before the Constitution is agreed by council on 1<sup>st</sup> April.
13. All of the regulatory committees are now finalised and training has been undertaken (or is planned) for Members in the critical areas of Licensing, Planning and Housing.

#### **'Must haves'**

14. The critical day one projects are continuing to be finalised with 27 now complete and over 30 nearly complete. Whilst several are still not as advanced as they should be by now, the corrective action being taken is improving the position with none providing any worries for day one service delivery.

#### **Members Seminar**

15. As well as the seminar to be arranged for the new Constitution, a seminar is planned for March which will share with members the arrangements in place from

Vesting Day for service provision and Member support. The date for this is to be confirmed.

16. A further seminar has also been arranged for Members on 4<sup>th</sup> March at 12.30pm and again at 6.30pm. This is to discuss the economic downturn.

### **LGR Programme Priorities**

17. The critical policies are now nearly all agreed, with decisions remaining on the budget for the new Council (to be agreed by Council on 27<sup>th</sup> February), the new Council Corporate Plan (a draft is currently with Directors for discussion), and finalising the harmonisation of fees, charges and concessions (with a focus on the legal imperatives).
18. Work has now turned to the establishment of the Council's Corporate Improvement Programme which will deliver the transformation change required to create the 'flagship' council. This will be managed under the '*Altogether better*' tag line which is being used in the advertising to launch the new Council.

### **CLG Stocktake**

19. A team from the Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG) and Government Office North East conducted a 'stocktake exercise' on 6<sup>th</sup> February. The purpose of the visit was to allow CLG to find out how well preparations are going and to see if there are any areas where we require further help and support from Central Government. They met the Leaders of the political groups, several portfolio Cabinet Members, the Corporate Management Team and a number of officers involved in workstreams.
20. The visit provided a useful opportunity for the Council to review its progress and plans for Vesting Day. The initial feedback received at the end of the visit was very positive, with a healthy recognition of the progress made.
21. A formal report on the visit will be produced which will be sent here for our comment before it goes into the public domain.

### **Recommendations**

22. Cabinet are asked to note the contents of this report.

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**Contact: Roger Goodes Tel: 0191 383 5714**

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