

**REPORT FROM THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL
AND EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES
TO THE MEETING OF FULL COUNCIL
ON WEDNESDAY, 8 JULY 2015**

Social Work Innovation Fund

As previously reported the Isle of Wight Council, in partnership with Hampshire County Council, is part of a £4m project to transform children's social work. This week the highly skilled personal assistants have taken up their roles to work alongside social workers with the aim of reducing the amount of time social workers are office based undertaking administrative tasks. This will free up the social workers time to allow them to spend more time working with our most vulnerable children and families. In addition, the volunteer element of the project continues to gather pace. The application process, forms and advert have been developed and the role description is now being finalised. We are working with our Hampshire colleagues, Youth Offending Team and third sector partners to promote and recruit volunteers in readiness for an autumn start. Once recruited and trained they will complement the work of our social workers in supporting vulnerable children in our communities.

Thompson House Tuition Centre

Since my last report I am pleased to advise you that Thompson House Tuition Centre, now known as the Island Learning Centre, has been given a 'good' rating by Ofsted in its latest Ofsted inspection. Inspectors praised the centre's strong leadership and improved teaching which meets the individual needs of students, who for whatever reason are unable to attend school. This is yet another example of the progress being made in our ongoing education improvement journey – so my thanks to everyone who is working hard to make such positive changes.

Anti-Bullying

Following the very successful anti-bullying conference last year there will be another event held on 7 October 2015 and the planning for this is ongoing. It is aimed at children and young people from school years 5-11 and aims to promote key anti-bullying messages in advance of the national anti-bullying week (16th – 20th November 2015) and beyond. The theme for this year will be: 'Enjoy the journey' and we will explore safety to and from school including on buses/trains, walking and cycling/scooting.

In support of the Conference theme and Anti-Bullying Week, we have launched a poster competition from 1 June 2015 with prizes to be awarded at the conference. The theme for the posters will be: 'Enjoy the journey' and will be used to promote positive behaviour on transport to and from school with winning entries displayed on buses. The deadline for entries is Friday 11 September.

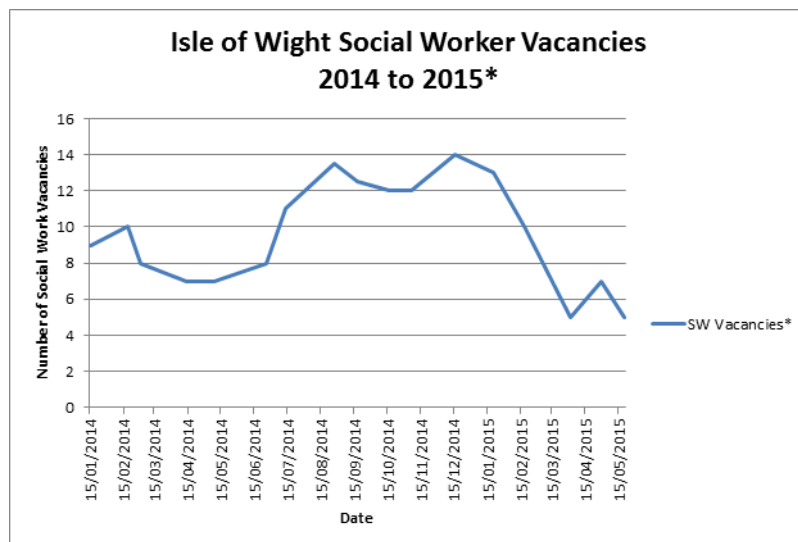
I am also pleased to be able to inform you that the Isle of Wight Council has been successful in becoming a Stonewall Training Partner to work with schools to deliver training on tackling homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying.

Fostering

The Isle of Wight was fully involved in the national Foster Care Fortnight because our local children need Island foster homes. It is so important that we recruit more foster carers here on the Island. Part of this work included a successful drop-in session with several people expressing an interest in becoming foster carers for the Council. If we can recruit more local foster carers it will make such a positive difference to our children. As an encouragement new foster carers will receive a £1,000 payment for their first placement which is in addition to their standard weekly allowances. In addition foster carers receive comprehensive training and ongoing support to ensure they can help transform vulnerable children's lives. More information is available on the Council's website at [About Fostering](#).

Recruitment and Retention of Social Workers

Children's social care has been making a major effort to recruit and retain their social workers so there is no longer a dependency on locum social workers. Whilst the use of locum social workers can be convenient at times of times of high demand and to cover short term absences, it is far more expensive and offers less consistency for our families. I am pleased to be able to report that there has been a gradual decrease from a high of 14 agency workers in January 2015 to 5 in May. We are also awaiting three new social workers who are due to qualify shortly and who will take up social work posts which are currently held by locum workers. This is significant progress.



MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub)

Cllr Gauntlett and I recently undertook a visit to the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), which is based in Fareham. This is where all enquiries and referrals to children's social care for the Isle of Wight and

Hampshire are received. Specialist workers from children's social care, the Police and Health then triage these referrals to make sure children and families receive the right support at the right time. Professionals who contact MASH receive expert safeguarding advice and support. We were able to meet staff and observe all stages of the referral and triage process. We both felt reassured that calls into the service are receiving an appropriate response and continue to ensure we have a safe front door to children's social care.

Visits

Since the last meeting of the Full Council I have visited a number of schools, including Dover Park Primary, IW College, Summerfields, Northwood Primary, Wootton Community Primary as well as Beaulieu House.

Combined Authorities

The motions on the agenda for this evening's meeting set out one option for the possible involvement of the Isle of Wight in a combined authority and no doubt members will welcome the chance to express a view on this option. What I am aware of and was confirmed to me by colleagues at the Local Government Association last week is that there are many different models that could be used in pursuing a combined authority option but the most critical thing in any debate is that form must follow function. That is to say we must be clear about what we want to achieve from a combined authority before we decide on the form it should take.

Therefore this council and any that it may enter into a discussion with about this forming a combined authority must be clear about the benefits that we collectively wish to achieve. A combined authority does not mean the end of the Isle of Wight Council but it does mean the creation of a body capable of taking responsibility for some functions of government in order that they can be better delivered to meet local need and in a more effective way. If this cannot be achieved there would be no point in entering into a combined authority. The risk still remains that whatever form of combined authority we might want to support if there continues to be insufficient government funding for the public sector it will be set up to fail.

Solent Local Enterprise Partnership (SLEP)

I am pleased to report that the business case for SLEP growth deal funding to support the East Cowes gateways project was submitted to the SLEP by the end of June and the board is due to consider the allocation of £15m to the joint partners (Red Funnel, Southampton City Council and the Isle of Wight Council) when it meets on 10 July

Report from Organisational Change and Human Resources

Organisational Change

The corporate management team and Executive continue to meet on a monthly basis to monitor progress on the delivery of the council's budget strategy and have

commenced preparation for the development of budget options for the coming year. The organisational change team and related service areas have continued to be busy in supporting service departments in the delivery of this year's budget strategy. Some of the key activities are set out below:

Shared Services

A number of workshops have been held within service areas as part of the initial scoping required to understand which roles and functions could be delivered from the business centre. The Shared Services manager has met with various adult social care teams, housing, planning, building control, elections and land charges and revenues and benefits. This is an area of sensitivity for staff and following concerns of administrative staff in adult social care a further meeting took place with staff and trade union representatives, together with the Leader and Deputy Leader to address those issues. It is recognised that there is other activity taking place to review business and service processes in order to meet the requirements of the Care Act. The Shared Business Services Manager is working closely with the project team delivering this activity to ensure that there is a streamlined approach to the transfer of functions to the business centre and at an appropriate point and it is likely that savings proposals under development will contribute to the 16/17 savings target.

Plans are now being developed to join roles and teams within the business centre who administer similar functions. This month has seen two benefit advisors transfer to the Contact Centre and now all housing benefit and council tax support calls are being fielded by these officers and two members of the contact centre team who have undertaken intensive training. Although it is early days in the transfer of this function, the abandoned rate of benefit calls has significantly reduced by the function being administered by the centralised team thereby giving the resident a better experience.

Service redesigns and savings proposals are also being developed with service areas. At present £300k has been identified across the exchequer, revenue and benefits, ICT and commercial service areas. This leaves a shortfall for 15/16 of approximately £200,000 at the present time. Proposals are being considered for the potential savings that could be made by the integration of the Wightcare call handling function with the contact centre and wider integrated contact centre which could realise a further £100k and exploration of other potential options continues.

Contact Centre

The Contact Centre is continuing to support call handling and admin support in the Adult First Response and Wightcare teams whilst the processes are being redesigned following the implementation of the Care Act. This support from the business centre team enables the teams to reduce the need for the payment of additional hours and to keep costs to a minimum.

The administrative team who support senior management have joined the business centre and now report to the Contact Centre manager.

The Contact Centre team are now assisting the communications team with responding and resolving customer enquiries / comments made on twitter and facebook.

There have been many concerns expressed about the waiting times for calls to be answered by the contact centre but recent benchmarking identifies that out of 31 local authorities within the benchmarking group the Island's team fares very well by comparison as set out below:

Measure	Average	IOW Council
Number of calls offered	88,119	110,879
Calls answered	76,602	94,405
Percentage answered	88	85
Average wait for answer (in seconds)	95	46
Number of staff	36	12.41
Calls answered per member of staff	2466	7607

This in comparison with research undertaken into the average call waiting times of some of the major private sector organisations in the UK puts this into stark context. A few examples to illustrate this include BT – 13.49 minutes average waiting time; Sky – 9.09 minutes; Lloyds Bank – 10.29 minutes; HSBC bank – 6.06 minutes.

All the contact centre advisors are generic and able to answer any of the enquiries that filter through the contact centre although there are specialists in each of the main areas of contact. They also undertake outbound calls in response to voicemails and support the local assistance scheme and debt recovery processes. They conduct many other processing activities relating to council tax and business rates, concessionary bus passes and vendor set ups etc so it's not just about answering the phone and passing calls through. They are also playing a significant role in assisting with the transition to self-service through electronic means to avoid calls being made in the first place.

Human Resources

In conjunction with school Business Managers, work has been taking place to develop a fully managed and integrated service offering to schools comprising strategic and transactional HR related services as well as payroll and pensions. This service is about to be launched to all Island schools where the Council is the employer with the intention of providing a seamless service whilst at the same time generating additional income for the Council.

The Team are currently working with managers on a total of 46 formal procedure cases, 31 informal cases and 41 cases for general advice, all of which seek to reduce their entry into formal procedures. The majority of these cases (48 in total) relate to supporting managers with organisational restructures which are taking place following various decisions made at Full Council in February in connection with the budget for 2015/16.

Health and Safety

Following the development and re-introduction of the provision of health and safety services to Island schools, where the Council is the employer, we have been successful in being selected by a total of six schools to date to provide advice and guidance to them. This is a particularly encouraging start and will yield much needed additional income for the Council.

Equality and Diversity

The Council's Executive approved the new Equality Objectives which now form the action plan for the staff Equality Group to assist in its delivery. The Strategic Diversity Board approved the proposed action plan and this will now lead to the delivery of a series of initiatives to improve equality issues for staff and members of our community.

People Resourcing

The LGA made a visit to the Island to meet with Organisational Change to see how they can assist our future workforce planning activity. As a result the Council will now have LGA / Local Leadership participation in our new leadership programme. Additionally the Isle of Wight Council is one of a handful of Local Authorities participating in a national working group exploring the growing impact of the 21st Century Public Servant, a research programme led by the University of Birmingham and Birmingham City Council on how the workforce must change to meet different community needs.

Payroll and Pensions

The project to ensure that all employees received an electronic payslip closed at the end of May with no paper payslips being printed. Electronic P60s were also successfully issued at the end of May.

Facilities Management

The Facilities Management team at County Hall have completed training to undertake the portable appliances (PA) test and have been working with a number of residential homes to ensure their electrical equipment is compliant. The team plan to develop a schedule to carry out PA testing across all council sites so that this function is maintained 'in house' and reduces costs.

The team are also working with the Deputyship and Housing teams to move client's belongings to the Council store thereby creating an internal revenue stream.

The team have an annual income target of £69,000 and at the end of May the team were £1,000 above target due to the stores work with a number of Council services.

ICT

ICT services have made good progress in a number of areas which will both improve services and also reduce costs for the Authority. The biggest part of the original Transformation telephony project has been completed – the old Nortel analogue phone switches have been decommissioned and removed from County Hall. This is a major milestone with all phone lines now coming in on modern SIP technology. This will reduce telephony costs by as much as £45,000 annually through line rental, maintenance and call costs reductions as well as providing more resilience and greater flexibility of calls. Due to the physical size and make-up of the equipment the Team were even able to recover some money from the scrap value of the metal in the old system.

Migration of people onto new equipment, supporting flexible working, is progressing well. Indeed a large amount of computer equipment has been removed and cleansed ready for re-use. We are exploring ways that we can make this available for us in the community supporting groups such as Isle Help.

Network circuits continue to be improved allowing better connections and savings for service areas for example in the Library Service with reduction in costs from their network connections and work in the Guildhall in preparation for the Destination Management Organisation to be able to make use of the building.

The Software Development, Applications Support and Security Teams have all worked together to retain PCI-DSS compliance allowing us to continue taking electronic payments. This is a significant task which becomes more difficult each year as requirements and standards are updated.

The ICT Strategy to cover 2015-17 is being finalised setting out plans to make greater use of cloud services, more use of flexible working and technologies such as Office 365 and the use of people's own equipment for emails and calendar where possible to do so.

Councillor Jonathan Bacon

Leader of the Council and Executive Member for Children's Services