

## **Key issues – Legal Services**

### **Key elements of the Service**

The Legal Service provides for all of the Council's legal and governance needs across all business units. Our vision is to operate as a high quality, efficient, cost effective and client focused business.

The service is made up of the following teams:

- Housing and Litigation
- Partnership and Regeneration
- Corporate, Employment & Social Care
- Local Land Charges
- Births, Deaths, Marriages & Civil Partnerships

### **Recent Key Achievements**

- Participation in a joint exercise with 9 other London Boroughs to negotiate a framework agreement with a number of barristers chambers with a view to appointing them to provide legal advice and court representation at a competitive value for money rate.
- A lead role in the implementation of Category Management in terms of controlling corporate expenditure by business units on external legal providers.
- Acceptance onto the first tranche of Value For Money reviews as part of the overall strategic review of the Service
- Retention of LEXCEL and ISO 9001 practice management accreditation. The inspection took place in May and was passed with no non-compliances. The external auditors reported that they found excellent compliance with the requirements, and that staff were "very knowledgeable" of the requirements.
- Successful implementation of the new local Member complaints regime
- Upgrade of our case management system. This is expected to deliver improvements in system performance and functionality, and will enable the introduction of savings to clients via unit costing to be rolled out for certain types of 'routine' work.
- Assisting in the successful application for the grant of planning permission for the development of the new Heartlands High School as part of BSF.

- Significant recovery of debt owed to the Council. In the last financial year, the recovery of £893,392.66 in respect of Social Services (residential and community care fees) and Property Services (commercial rent arrears); assisting Homes for Haringey to achieve a rent arrears collection rate of 99.34% - the highest for 3.5 years

### **Key issues and challenges for next year**

- Successful implementation of the new structure for Legal Services by 1 April 2009. The new structure will ensure that the Service is in a position to best deliver the necessary support to business units and Members.
- Assisting and advising on the completion of investigations into the role of senior management at Alexandra Palace in relation to the licence granted to Firoka
- Progressing the review of the Council's Scheme of Delegation to Officers and other amendments to the Constitution
- Supporting the working group on the implementation of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007
- Continued support to deliver the BSF and Decent Homes projects
- An anticipated increase in defended litigation involving leaseholders arising out of invoices for major works
- Ongoing assistance to the retained Housing Service across a range of issues to include:
  - The production of the Council's Homelessness Strategy
  - Finding innovative ways to reduce the numbers of people in temporary accommodation so that it can meet the Government target of halving the numbers of people in temporary accommodation by 2010.
  - Meeting the Decent Homes Standard by 2010
  - A review of the Council's allocation scheme in line with the recent code of guidance
- On going support for Children's and Adults Services in terms of dealing with the Public Law Outline and the Personalisation Agenda respectively
- Participation in the next smart working pilot in March 2009
- To further develop the citizenship agenda with the Registration and Citizenship service playing a leading role in activities such as nationality checking service and citizenship ceremonies.

## **Key Issues – PPP&C - Policy & Performance**

### **Key elements of the service**

- Performance & Corporate Programme Office
- Policy
- Service Improvement
- Partnerships

### **Recent achievements**

- Final Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI) Data Quality Audit concluded with no reservations at this stage. The new performance framework of National Indicators came into force from April 2008 and the results of these will form part of the new Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA).
- 5 of the 6 chapters forming the first edition of the Borough Profile are published on Harinet. This planned regular publication draws upon a wide variety of information and data to build a detailed and comprehensive picture of Haringey. The document can be used to inform policy development and decision-making or simply to find out more about Haringey.
- The HSP's Homelessness Strategy was launched in September and Partnership Groups are being set-up to take the Strategy forward. This contributes to the Sustainable Community Strategy priority outcome of Healthier people with a better quality of life.
- The Child Poverty Strategy consultation period has concluded and analysis of the feedback is underway. This contributes to the Sustainable Community Strategy priority outcomes of– Economic vitality and prosperity shared by all and Healthier people with a better quality of life.
- Value for Money (VfM) reviews of Communications, Learning Disabilities and Building Control have been undertaken. These contribute to the Achieving Excellence programme.
- An Area Based Grant (ABG) assessment review was undertaken during July and August to capture the programmes, service and projects currently funded through the ABG. This will assist in ensuring stated outcomes are achieved, and inform future years funding allocation to projects.

### **Key Issues and challenges for next year**

- Policy and Performance will have responsibility for preparing and supporting the Council in meeting the requirements of a number of new legislative, regulatory, national and local policies, including:
  - Introduction of the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA)
  - Reviewing the Sustainable Community Strategy and the Council Plan.
  - Supporting the development of key strategies such as the Child Poverty, Housing, and Community Engagement Framework
  
- The team will continue to co-ordinate and support Council wide external assessments and inspections, drive sustainable service improvement, to support policy & strategy development and implementation of the Sustainable Community Strategy