

ANGUS COUNCIL**POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE - 23 JUNE 1998****LAW AND ADMINISTRATION DEPARTMENT - SERVICE PLAN 1998/99****REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF LAW AND ADMINISTRATION****ABSTRACT**

This Report sets out the key achievements of the Law and Administration Department in 1997/98 and advises members of the provisions of the Service Plan for the Department in 1998/99.

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Committee notes and approves the review of the Development Plan for 1997/98 and the terms of the Service Plan for 1998/99.

2. INTRODUCTION

Reference is made to Report No 718/97 which comprised the Development Plan for the Department for 1997/98. That Plan set out the review of 1996/97 and the action targets to be achieved in 1997/98.

3. REVIEW OF 1997/98

A list of the achievements for 1997/98 is attached as Appendix I to this Report, and a detailed review of the 1997/98 action targets for the Department is incorporated in the 1998/99 Service Plan, copies of which have been placed in the Councillors' Lounge.

A number of developments took place during 1997/98 which impacted to a considerable extent on the working of the department:-

- the retirement of a Principal Committee Officer and the Head of Legal Services (Contractor) led to restructuring of both sections of the department.
- the Parliamentary Election in May 1997, followed by the Referendum in September and Community Council Elections in September/October created a very heavy workload for a number of members of staff throughout the period;
- the change of Government in May 1997 resulted in a large number of Government initiatives, consultation papers etc which have required considerable work to provide responses within the required timescales. In particular, the move away from CCT to a Best Value regime has meant considerable work, not only for the department but throughout the Council, in setting up the necessary arrangements and beginning to work through the Council's Implementation Plan;
- the department has been heavily involved in major pieces of work being promoted by the Council. In particular, the finalising of the Development Agreement for the Carnoustie Hotel; the preparation work for a PFI for dualling the A92; and the setting up and administration of Area Forums throughout the Council's area have taken very considerable staffing resources.

4. TARGETS FOR 1998/99

Much of the work which has characterised 1997/98 will continue to impact upon the department in the course of the coming year. Considerable work will be required in respect of Best Value; administration of the Council's eight Area Forums; economic development initiatives; and responding to Government proposals and changes. The proposed combined poll for local government elections and elections for a Scottish Parliament in May 1999, closely followed by elections for the European Parliament in June 1999, will create a very heavy workload which will require a number of members of staff to work full-time on elections for quite some period.

In addition the work on the PFI for dualling the A92 requires much dedicated support from a Principal Solicitor appointed to the Project Team. While a temporary appointment of a basic grade solicitor has been made, this person will be required to carry out the land acquisition for the A92 Project. This Project will accordingly continue to have a very considerable impact on the resources of what is a small legal section.

The Service Plan sets out the action for 1998/99 under four main headings:-

- the contributions which the Department will make towards the Council's corporate strategy and the millennium targets in respect of the Council's key themes
- action targets for the Department for 1998/99
- the Best Value Service Review Programme
- the action plan in respect of the Accounts Commission Management Arrangements Audit - Managing People

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications arising directly from this Report.

6. CONSULTATION

The Chief Executive and the Director of Finance have been consulted on the contents of this Report.

Catherine A Coull
Director of Law and Administration

June 1998 servicereview

No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information), were relied on to any material extent in preparing this report.

LAW AND ADMINISTRATION DEPARTMENT - ACHIEVEMENTS 1997/98

- ◆ Following the retiral of a Principal Committee Officer, a review of the structure of the Committee Section was carried out which has resulted in financial savings.
- ◆ Following the retiral of the Head of Legal Services (Contractor), a review of the structure of the Legal Section was carried out which has resulted in financial savings.
- ◆ A number of meetings have been held with Heads of Departments and their management teams to discuss the services provided by Law and Administration and the satisfaction level with these services. The feedback from departments has in general been extremely positive.
- ◆ An out of hours service for providing legal advice in respect of certain social work cases has been introduced.
- ◆ The Development Agreement for the Carnoustie Hotel has been finalised.
- ◆ The Angus Community Care Charitable Trust has been established.
- ◆ An Angus Environmental Trust has been established.
- ◆ Considerable work has been achieved on the proposed PFI for the dualling of the A92.
- ◆ Procedures have been put in place for the administration and servicing of Area Forums.
- ◆ A guidance booklet has been published in respect of the Angus Licensing Board.
- ◆ A review of Standing Orders was carried out and new revised Standing Orders, Order of Reference of Committees and Scheme of Delegation to Officers became effective from 3 April 1998.
- ◆ Details of all publicly available registers are now included in Factbank.
- ◆ A register of reports has been computerised.
- ◆ A report on the Council's compliance with the COSLA Code on Openness and comments on the recommendations of the Nolan Committee were approved by the Council.
- ◆ A departmental training plan was prepared in line with Council policy and this has been implemented and reviewed as necessary over the course of the year.
- ◆ The department continues to encourage the use of plain language in correspondence and reports.
- ◆ All necessary risk assessments to implement the departmental health and safety policy have been carried out and appropriate members of staff have received the necessary training.
- ◆ The Council Intranet is now being used extensively for committee reports which greatly improves efficiency in issuing pre-agendas and agendas.
- ◆ A time management system has been introduced in the Legal Section and provided the information required for central support year end recharges.

- ◆ Further efficiency improvements have been achieved in the property enquiry service and the costs has been reduced. A marketing leaflet has been issued to all local Solicitors.
- ◆ Title deeds and other legal archives have been relocated to St James House and indexed and a considerable cost saving has been achieved.
- ◆ Informal performance targets in respect of committee servicing have been achieved.
- ◆ Detailed budget monitoring statements have been submitted to each meeting of the departmental management team.
- ◆ A procedure for sickness absence monitoring has been implemented and regular reports are submitted to the departmental management team.
- ◆ A move to total wordprocessing has been carried out together with more integration between typing and filing.
- ◆ Reception facilities at headquarters buildings are in course of improvement and telephone and reception services have been separated at St James House.
- ◆ Telephone monitoring reports are now provided on a monthly basis. A new internal telephone directory has been finalised and issued. The telephone directory is now available on the Council Intranet.
- ◆ Considerable computerisation has been achieved in the department and the majority of staff now have access to the internal E-Mail.
- ◆ A repairs and renewals fund has been established for the Print and Design Unit. In 1997/98 the Unit achieved a surplus which allowed for investment in new equipment to improve the service delivered.
- ◆ The Referendum on the Scottish Parliament was carried out.
- ◆ Community Councils were consulted on arrangements for community council elections and these elections were carried out.
- ◆ A new election management system has been purchased and is being installed which will allow for increased efficiency in election management.
- ◆ With regard to the Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages a meeting was held with the Registrar General who expressed satisfaction with the level of service and the developments proposed.
- ◆ The Council has approved the move of the Arbroath Registrars into new accommodation.
- ◆ The Council has approved the computerisation of the Registrars service.
- ◆ New software was introduced for the District Court which has resulted in more efficient fine collection and improved monitoring arrangements.
- ◆ A new service has been introduced whereby departments are circulated with lists of Statutory Instruments, copies of which can be ordered from the department.
- ◆ Improvements have been made to the Legal Library.