

<b>Report on</b>	Service Improvement Plan – Legal Services
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	9 September 2021
<b>Reporting Officer</b>	Director of Finance
<b>Contact Officer</b>	Director of Finance

<b>Is this report restricted for confidential business?</b>	Yes	
If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	No	X

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report</b>
1.1	To provide Members with an update in relation to the Legal Services Department Service Improvement Plan for 2021/22.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Background</b>
2.1	The attached Service Improvement Plan (SIP) shows how the service provided by the Legal Service's Department will contribute to Council's corporate objectives during 2021/22.
2.2	A Legal Services Department SIP was also in place for 2020/21 and a section of the attached SIP details the performance overview for that year.
2.3	The SIP also includes a work plan and action plan for 2021/22 outlining the various actions to be taken by the Department during the current year.
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	There are several actions and outcomes set out within the attached SIP which will be reported on over the course of 2021/22.
3.2	The SIP also includes details of risks relevant to the Legal Services Department and details of the mitigation measures in place to control these in the most appropriate way.
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Other Considerations</b>
4.1	<b>Financial, Human Resources &amp; Risk Implications</b>
	Financial: All aspects of the Legal Services Department's costs have been included within 2021/22 revenue budgets. However, outsourced and third party legal costs, and potential Court awards are difficult to budget with any degree of certainty,

	<p>especially given the increasingly litigious environment in which the Council operates. Notwithstanding the inevitable uncertainty surrounding the adequacy of revenue budgets, the officers are satisfied that the Council's reserves and cash balances, together with its insurance arrangements should be sufficient to meet any costs associated with the Legal Services Department (which represents the Council's corporate interests) that may arise during 2021/22.</p>
	<p>Human: The Legal Services Department is supplemented by a range of third party legal advisers, each with specific areas of expertise. The balance between internal and external resourcing will continue to be kept under review.</p>
	<p>Risk Management: The Legal Services Department is a key contributor to the Council successfully managing its strategic and operational risks. Given the small staffing complement, the Department (and therefore the Council) may be exposed to risks associated with prolonged staff absences should they arise for whatever reason. The repositioning of the Department within the Corporate Services/Finance Directorate should mitigate some of this risk, with the residual risk remaining under review.</p>
<b>4.2</b>	<b>Screening &amp; Impact Assessments</b>
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: N/A
	Rural Needs Implications: N/A
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Recommendation(s)</b>
5.1	That the Committee notes the 2021-2022 Service Improvement Plan for Legal Services.
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Documents Attached &amp; References</b>
6.1	Legal Services Department's Service Improvement Plan 2021/22