

Leader's Statement to Full Council – Wednesday 20 September 2017

MKS Recruitment update

As I hand over the Chairmanship of the Mid Kent Services Board I thought it was an appropriate time to provide an update on the recent recruitments within the partnership. Members will appreciate there have previously been a number of interim appointments in key roles and I am pleased that we have now been able to appoint permanently. In all cases we had a very robust recruitment process including technical assessments, stakeholder panels and formal interviews and presentations.

I can confirm that Steve McGinnes has been appointed to the role of Director for Mid Kent Services. Steve has already had a taste of the challenges of this position as he has been carrying out the role of interim Director since August 2016. He is looking forward to working across the services and reinforcing our partnership links. Having worked within a shared service for the past 6 years he has a good insight into the benefits and complexities which they bring and will be supporting the next stage of shared service development.

We have also appointed Chris Woodward as permanent Head of the IT Shared Service. Chris has been a member of our IT shared service from the outset and has been covering the Head of Service role on an interim basis. Before joining the council Chris held a number of senior roles within the private sector and has a strong technical background as well as the drive to move the service forward which is essential if we are to achieve our priorities.

Finally, I can confirm the appointment of the new Head of Legal Partnership. I am particularly pleased that we have been able to recruit as currently this is a very competitive market. We have appointed Patricia Narebor who was previously Deputy Monitoring Officer and Head of Commercial Law at the London Borough of Hackney. Patricia is an experienced lawyer, with considerable knowledge of handling complex issues and has a background in contracts, procurement, planning and property as well as matters of governance and local authority constitutions and has considerable experience of working with Members.

We have also been notified that Dena Smart, Head of the Shared HR service with Maidstone, intends to retire on 5th January 2018. We are currently considering recruitment options but I would like to put on record my appreciation for Dena's commitment and contribution to establishing the shared HR and payroll service and for providing advice on strategic HR matters.

Sittingbourne Town Centre update

Progress continues across a number of elements of the programme. Phase One roadworks are now in operation. Whilst there was a slight delay with the Milton Road closure and a few teething problems with St Michaels Road, these have been resolved and it is now full steam ahead to completion of the first phase by Christmas. The retail site progresses well and you will see the steel framework emerging from behind the hoardings. The council has signed the contract with Huber and work to the MSCP

begins February 2018. Work continues to progress the leisure scheme to unconditionality. Exciting times for Sittingbourne Town Centre.

Changes to cashless parking

Payments for parking in Swale Borough Council car parks have been made easier following the introduction of RingGo phone parking payments across each of the council's 27 pay and display car parks from Saturday 9 September. Our supplier RingGo has wide coverage across Kent and so many customers will already be familiar with using the app or phone payment line.

The service is quick and easy to use following registration, and so customers need not worry about having change available to pay for parking. Drivers wishing to pay by cash will still be able to do so at the pay and display machines.

The cashless payment service allows our customers to pay for their parking either via their app or by calling 01795 570300 with the added benefit that drivers will not be charged a convenience charge for the service. Drivers are also able to receive text reminders or extend their parking time for a minimal charge.

Further developments in parking are planned during 2017, which include a contactless payment system trial. This development will allow drivers the freedom to park and spend time in town without having to worry about what time they need to get back to their vehicle. These systems provide a flexible pre and post parking payment service from the pay unit.

Environmental Awards

Swale Borough Council's TIKPAK initiative has been nationally recognised at the Association of Public Service Excellence (APSE) Awards as the Best Community and Neighbourhood Initiative Scheme for 2017. This excellent scheme providing free at point of use dog bags in prominent dog walking areas has had a positive impact on reducing dog fouling in the borough. This scheme which is funded by local businesses not only provides increased exposure of their business but also enables them to give something back to the community. I would like to express my thanks to the Environmental Response Team for developing and embedding this excellent project within the borough along with those local business who have provided the valuable funding to make it happen.

It is also gives me great pleasure in announcing that the Stray Dog Service have also retained the RSPCA Gold Stray Dogs Footprint Award for the 8th consecutive year, which recognises the highest standards in animal welfare in preventing and caring for stray dogs. I can also report that our Emergency Planning team has also been awarded a RSPCA Gold award for contingency planning footprint for its work to ensure welfare of animals during an emergency. Well done to them for being recognised for the first time.

Cllr Andrew Bowles
Leader