

CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Environment and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date of Meeting: 16 November 2017
Report of: Director of Planning & Sustainable Development
Subject/Title: Civicance Ltd – Progress Update
Portfolio Holder: Councillor Arnold

1.0 Report Summary

1.1 This report provides Members of the Committee with an update on the progress and performance of the ASDV of Civicance Ltd for the year 2016/17

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is requested to note the progress made by Civicance Ltd.

3.0 Reasons for Recommendation

3.1 As part of the Council's move towards being a "Commissioning Council" Civicance Ltd as one of the Council's new Alternative Service Delivery Vehicles (ASDVs) is key to the delivery of a range of services and "outcomes" for local residents. It is important to ensure that these are achieved through the ongoing monitoring of the Contract.

4.0 Wards Affected

4.1 N/A

5.0 Local Ward Members

5.1 N/A

6.0 Financial Implications

6.1 Civicance receives a Management Fee for the delivery of service to be renegotiated annually with the Council.

7.0 Legal implications (authorised by the Borough Solicitor)

7.1 Civicance has a 7 year contract with Cheshire East. The contract commenced on 1st April 2015.

8.0 Commentary

8.1 Civicance Ltd has now been operational for over 2 years, delivering the following services:

- Building Control
- Local Land Charges
- Planning Support, liaison and customer interface
- Street Naming and Numbering

8.2 Appendix 1 provides details of the performance from April 2016 to March 2017. This shows a continued busy period of activity across all the main service areas with some key operational achievements. This has included registration of over 6200 planning applications – and increase of 11% over the previous year; 2216 Building Regulation applications including those from partnership arrangements; responding to 133 dangerous structures and handling over 9000 land charge search requests.

8.3 Building Control remains a challenging competitive market with the focus on delivering a responsive service whilst also continuing to market the services they can offer. Work from Staffordshire Moorlands and High Peak Councils is now undertaken on a daily basis. Resourcing the Building Control team remains a concern while fees for some work is often higher than private sector bodies and they are not required to carry out statutory, non-fee earning work.

8.4 A number of business improvement changes have now also been made – particularly to improve the planning support service. The speed of application registration continues at very high levels and hitting identified targets with strong positive feedback from customers. In liaison with Development Management, a number of process improvements have been made to assist both efficiency and effectiveness for customers and planning staff. There is still more work to do and over the next few months the focus will be on the validation requirements and quality of application submissions.

8.5 Land Charge searches remain buoyant with an improvement in turnaround performance due to additional training which has enabled Civicance to take control of all the questions within the search.

8.6 Financially, Civicance had an income shortfall of 151K which was funded through company profits (which was mostly staffing efficiencies). This shortfall and the underlying pressures will need to be reviewed over the next 12 months.

9.0 Appendices

Appendix 1 – Performance Update Report 2016-17

10.0 Access to Information

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer:

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