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## **EK Services Performance, Emerging Vision and Thoughts on the Future**

**To: Corporate Performance Review Working Party - 09 March 2015**

**By: Dominic Whelan – Director of Shared Services**

**Classification: Unrestricted**

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**Summary:** This report will provide a summary of key performance indicators for the services delivered by EK Services for Thanet District Council, which include ICT, EKHR, Customer Delivery (Income (Revenues), Payments (Benefits) and Customer Services).

It will also be supported by a short presentation on the emerging vision from the new Director and thoughts for the future. The report will cover service performance over the three months Nov 14 to Jan 15 inclusive.

### **For Information**

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#### **1.0 Introduction and Background**

1.1 **EK Services** – The new Director has now been in post for three months and has been requested to provide an update on quarterly service performance. The Committee will also be given a verbal brief by the Director which will provide an overview of the shared services and emerging thoughts.

#### **2.0 Key Performance Indicators**

2.1 Overall performance is stable and remains on track to achieve end of year targets. However, we do remain slightly below target on two areas:

2.1.1 Non Domestic Rates (NDR) - Business rates. Due to the recent changes that allow NDR customers to profile payments over 12 months rather than 10 months, the current level of recovery is slightly below target (as at end of Jan 15, performance is currently 91.42% against a target of 96.78%). However, we remain confident that this will move up further as we receive the extra two months worth (of the 12 month) income and we currently predict that the end of year target will be met (end of year target is 98.05%).

2.1.2 Council Tax (CT). CT collection is below target (as at end of Jan 15, performance is currently 92.4% against a target of 92.82%) and at this stage we believe that the end of the year position is at risk (end of year target is 96.0%). This is due to the impact of Council Tax Support (CTS) reduction which has seen £421,600 less paid out in CTS payments but equally increases the CT collection amount accordingly. This reflects some good news, in terms of socio-economic terms, as it reflects a positive trend in terms of an increase of residents having more income than previously. However, the increase results in additional challenges in chasing payers who are impacted. We are increasing resources from other EKS areas to assist in

the work and ensure everything possible is done to achieve the collection rate but, at this stage we are not confident of hitting the target.

- 2.1.3 In other areas, we fell very slightly below target in the number of calls dealt with by automation (EKS 25t) which is primarily down to the introduction in changes within the call script used for Waste, where following customer feedback more people are currently being handled on queries by advisors and less via the automated forms. This has meant that we have not met the target for December however still on track for year end and overall a better customer experience. We also suffered slightly in HR Recruitment targets, specifically the time taken to get recruitment letters issued (EKHR07t). This period has been impacted by some large scale projects involving significant recruitment. We are reviewing how best to handle large scale campaigns and how to ensure impact across the partnership is minimised. However, we remain on track to achieve end of year targets

### **3.0 Innovation and Initiatives in Progress or achieved**

- 3.1 **Section 44a (NDR Discretionary Reductions).** We continue to work with Paul Cook on the changes to the section 44a policy that has recently been approved by Cabinet. This will provide a better management of the policy that allows businesses to apply for Business rates reduction in cases, for instance, where they may have a portion of their business not in use. The new policy will ensure that any request from a business for such discretion that may have an impact of £10k on the council income targets, will be passed to the Council for determination. Previously there was an automatic referral to the Valuation Office for determination.

- 3.2 **Business Intelligence.** We have been assessing potential solutions to better inform the forecasting of Business Rates yield – especially around changes of circumstances for bigger businesses in the area. We have now procured a new intelligence tool which will gather data from a variety of sources to forecast and alert us to the following:

- Potential business failures which may affect the council's gross RV;
- New businesses opening up which may not be "on the radar";
- Cross checking of reliefs to see if businesses are still entitled;
- A forecast of "likelihood of payment" based on current credit data, and
- Data matching to make sure we have the correct business name on the system to avoid complications at later stages of recovery.

- 3.3 **Elections.** EKS and EKHR are preparing to support the elections in May with staff support. However, at this stage the primary involvement is from ICT who are involved in the enabling activity for the supporting requirements needed. This includes support to enable the Electronic collation of election results, including the provision of laptops, screens and printers; and offering technical support over the election period. Post Elections ICT will be involved in the redistribution of the iPads to the elected Members which includes attending and participation in Members induction sessions.

### **4.0 Compliments and Complaints**

- 4.1 **Compliments.** We recorded 13 compliments from customers in the period, up from 6 in the previous period (in relation to TDC service provision). There was an overwhelming theme of staff being polite, helpful and friendly and one customer

described a member of staff as being 'efficient, professional and valuable and that they made a very difficult situation manageable....'

- 4.2 **Complaints.** In the past three months, we have received 23 external complaints from customers, down from 24 in the previous three month period. The Director of Shared Services reviews all complaints on a monthly basis and reports them all, in greater detail to the TDC Client Officer. Where complaints are generated due to errors made by staff, learning outcomes are recorded to help alleviate the same error happening again. In the period, nine complaints were unfounded as in most cases it was because the customer was unhappy with regulations/policy decisions made by Government or the Council rather than an EKS generated issue.

An example is individuals querying 'why they had to pay CT on second homes'. Other complaints are often linked to delays, perceived or actual, in processing; for instance, in one particular case this was because someone handed personal documentation to the Council main reception and not in at the Gateway. In another case, a complaint was raised about the automated system discriminating against deaf people, for which possible solutions are being looked into.

## 5.0 Recommendation

- 5.1 Members are requested to note the report.

## 6.0 Decision Making Process

- 6.1 The Corporate Performance Review Working Party is a sub-group of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel that can review the performance of Council and any of its partnerships, including Shared Services and offer advice mainly through the Panel to Cabinet or where specified directly to the Executive.

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## Annex List

Annex 1	EK Services Performance – Latest position at January 2015
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## Corporate Consultation Undertaken

Finance:	N/A
Legal:	N/A