

EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL,  
SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL AND  
BRIGTON AND HOVE CITY COUNCIL

ORBIS JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING

DATE: 28<sup>th</sup> MAY 2020

LEAD OFFICER: NIGEL MANVELL (DEPUTY CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL), KEVIN FOSTER (CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL), LEIGH WHITEHOUSE (EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL)

**SUBJECT: ORBIS PERFORMANCE MONITORING**

**SUMMARY OF ISSUE:**

To provide an update on key performance metrics across the partnership.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

It is recommended that:

1. The Joint Committee notes the performance statistics presented.
2. Member advise and agree which service should be the focus of a performance review in the meetings.

**REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:**

The Joint Committee is responsible for the effective monitoring of Orbis performance

**DETAILS:**

**Background**

1. The terms of reference of the Joint Committee are to oversee and improve the delivery of the services for the benefit of each participating council and in particular to monitor the Orbis Business Plan and performance of the partnership.

**Orbis Joint Management Board**

2. In order to provide an update to the Joint Committee Management (JMB) a briefing report has been created. The highlight report provides a high-level synopsis of activities undertaken across the partnership against savings and identifies key risks for escalation. The briefing can be found in Annexe 1 of this report.

**Service Performance Measures and Oversight**

3. Building on the insight provided previously to this committee around Full Time Equivalent posts (FTE), sickness, absence etc. It is recognised that providing service specific measures is important to provide oversight to the Joint Committee and enable joint decision making.
4. A dashboard is continuing to be developed that will enable the visualisation of statistics.
5. Opportunity to introduce the concept and purpose of the Orbis Blueprint which has been developed to clearly define our Business Plans and sets out the key building blocks for the Partnership and areas that we need to focus on in order to be successful. The document can be found in Annexe 2 of this report.
6. It is also proposed that a deep dive into the performance measures of a specific service can be requested and be prepared for the Joint Committee. This option is to provide Members with an opportunity to understand existing performance arrangements within that service and to ensure that any issues identified are being addressed. IT&D Service Spotlight will be shared during this report.
7. Special emphasis has been given in this quarter's report to show how the Orbis services have supported and enabled the partner authorities in their COVID 19 response.

### People Insight

8. Data provided is for Q4 2019/20 – January, February and March 2020  
(Table 1 – Overall headline statistics by organisation)

### Orbis Performance Report – Q4 2019/20 – Orbis People

Headline measures	Orbis total	Brighton & Hove	East Sussex	Surrey
<b>Average employee numbers FTE</b>	1721.73	595.18	449.48	677.06
<b>Sickness absence, average days per FTE</b>	0.65	0.82	0.59	0.54
<b>Return to work interview, % complete</b>	78.21% (ESCC and BHCC only)	74.39%	85.43%	N/A
<b>Length of service of leavers</b>	N/A	30.8% had 1-5 years' service	35.3% had 1-5 years' service	39.9% had 1-5 years' service
<b>Average Agency staff spend</b>	4.42	N/A	N/A	N/A

### Staffing Numbers

9. It is important to track the number of FTEs in any business to understand whether these are significant changes in the short-term workforce. In an environment where savings are being delivered it is expected that the workforce would be decreasing over time.
10. There was an average of 1,721.73 FTE employed in Orbis in Q4, this is a reduction of 1.9% compared to the Q3 average  
(Table 2 – FTEs by service)

## Employee numbers

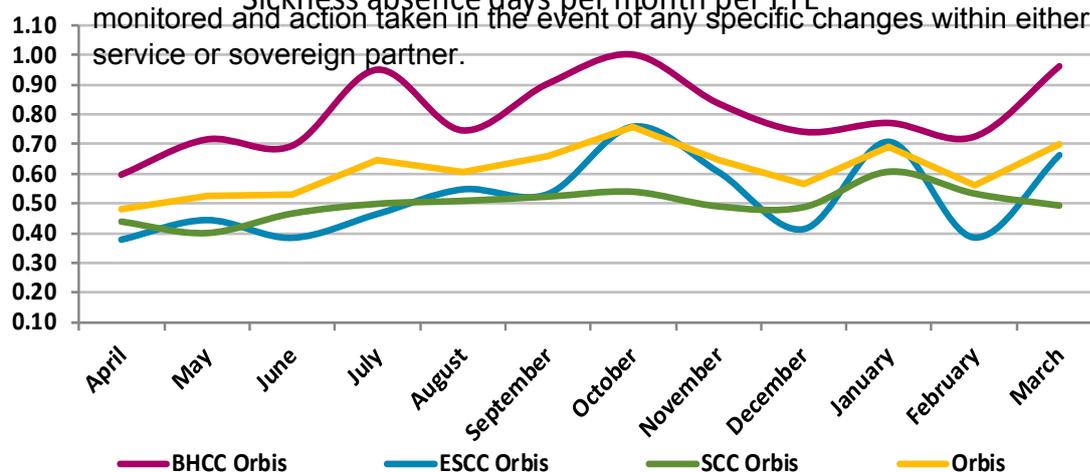
Full Time Equivalent (FTE) members of staff by service						
Average FTE Q4 2019/20						
	BHCC		ESCC		SCC	
	FTE	% of total	FTE	% of total	FTE	% of total
Business Ops	222.61	37.40%	62.33	13.87%	205.81	30.40%
Finance	43.69	7.34%	73.33	16.31%	75.80	11.20%
HR&OD	70.90	11.91%	45.03	10.02%	59.45	8.78%
IT&D	141.09	23.70%	162.16	36.08%	160.21	23.66%
Procurement	17.01	2.86%	26.47	5.89%	36.45	5.38%
Property	99.88	16.78%	80.16	17.83%	139.33	20.58%
<b>Total FTE</b>	<b>595.18</b>		<b>449.48</b>		<b>677.06</b>	

BHCC and ESCC 1 FTE = 37 contract hours per week, SCC 1 FTE = 36 contract hours per week

Figures include vacant posts and are not the budgeted FTE

## Sickness Absence

11. A primary area of focus is to understand the relative sickness absence rates across the three councils and within each Orbis Service, this will enable trends to be monitored and action taken in the event of any specific changes within either a service or sovereign partner.

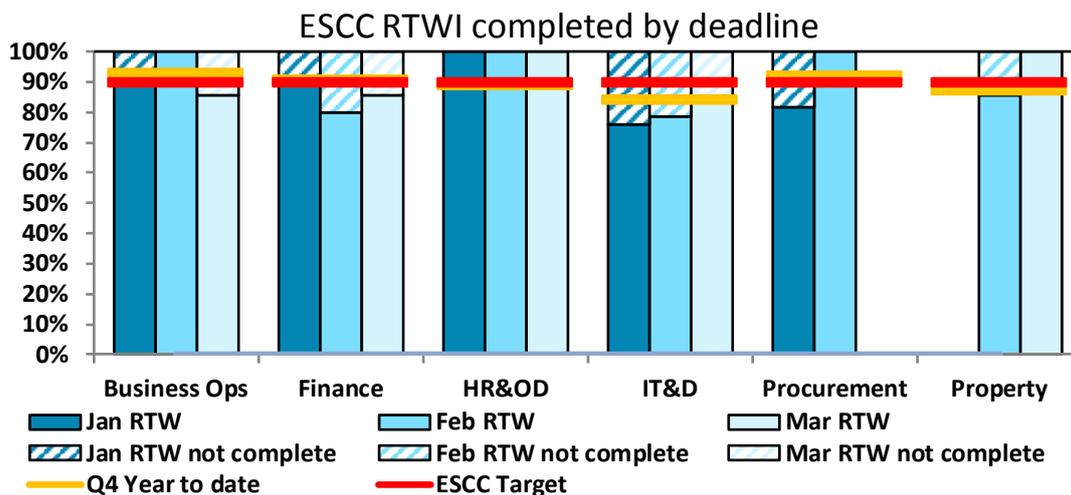
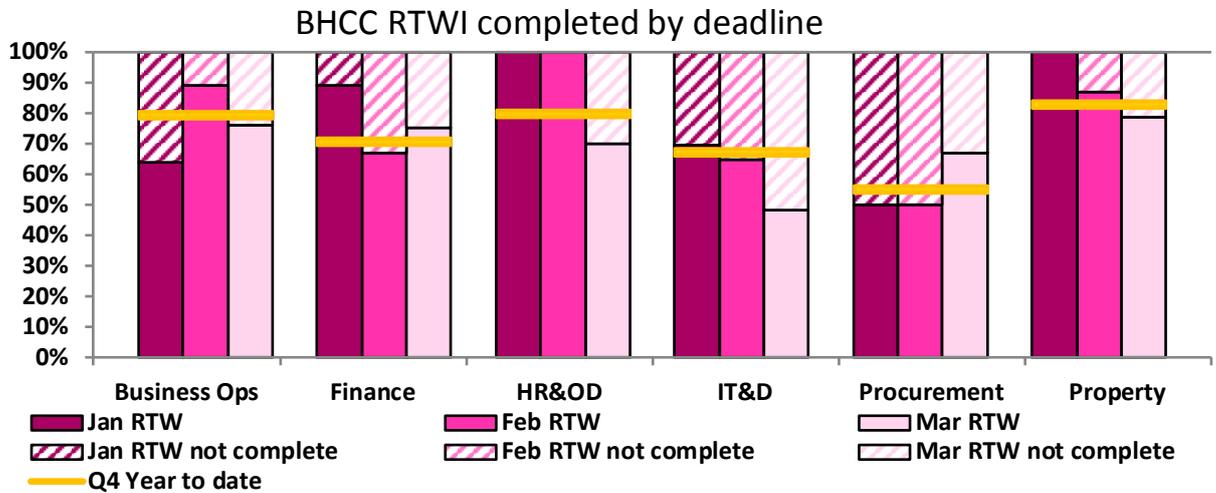


12. BHCC saw higher sickness rates than ESCC or SCC throughout 2019/2020
13. ESCC and BHCC both use Firstcare for sickness absence reporting, this ensures sickness is captured on the first day the employee is absent providing a more accurate measure. In SCC sickness is based on a 12 month rolling average and added by staff on their return to work from a period of absence.
14. Orbis absence rates are generally lower than wider sovereign averages which is consistent with reported data that reflects higher rates of absence in frontline service areas such as Adults and Childrens Services. (Rates are typically in the region of 20% lower)

## Return to work interviews (RTWI)

15. Data is available for ESCC and BHCC around return to work interviews.

Note: BHCC RTWI compliance is measured against a five working day deadline, ESCC is measured against seven calendar days. BHCC don't have a target for RTWI completed by deadline.



16. BHCC RTWI compliance has fluctuated in Q4 whilst ESCC has continued to consistently achieve compliance targets.

17. There is currently no way SCC can report RTWI as this is not reported or captured centrally but managed locally by line managers.

### Partnership Update

18. New Inter-Authority Agreement for the period April 2020 to March 2023 has been signed and all Partners are committed to the principles underpinning the Orbis Partnership and comfortable with a mixed model, whereby the scope can be different for each council. The apportionment of funding and savings will reflect the mixed model rather than a full partnership basis.

- a. SCC's Finance and HR/OD functions return to SCC, with exception of CoEs within Finance.
- b. No fundamental change in scope to IT&D, Business Operations and Procurement.

- c. Principles and approach for the disaggregation of services developed are being carefully managed.

19. Introduction to the Orbis Blueprint (Annexe 2)

- a. An Orbis Blueprint has been developed to simplify the Business Plans and sets out the key building blocks for the Partnership and areas that we need to focus on in order to continue to be successful.
- b. The Orbis Blueprint outlines our vision and priorities for the future, provides a strategic framework and increased visibility to our sovereign partners, staff and customers regarding how we will continue to develop the Partnership.
- c. There are three key areas of focus outlined in the Blueprint People, Customer and Innovation and what has become apparent over the last 6 weeks is just how integral the pillars are and how evident they have been in the way that staff across Orbis have responded to the challenges that COVID-19 has presented. (Some key areas of focus noted below in point 21 incorporating learnings from our response to COVID-19.)

20.

21. COVID-19 Response

- a. The pace and scale of change required in our response to COVID-19 as a Partnership has meant that we have had to look at how we can do things differently on a scale like never before.
- b. Orbis services have worked together to ensure staff in all partners and directorates have the tools and technology they need to enable safe and effective home working in a supported way, while maintaining BAU delivery.
- c. All services have responded to the specific needs of the sovereign customers and ensured that external customers and residents continue to receive the support they need.
- d. **Key Highlights**
  - i. **IT&D** – Rapid deployment of home working equipment and tools deploying circa 800 laptops to essential staff groups. Sourced and provided over 175 mobile phones and implemented a new softphone solution for approximately 480 staff. Enabling remote access to approximately 1,500 school staff for teaching and administrative purposes. Responding to 2,800 support calls in April 2020 from schools seeking assistance with enabling home learning and teacher remote access.
  - ii. **Procurement** – The PPE team have made great progress on building a reliable supply chain of certified suppliers and getting stocks in place. Additional resource has been provided by the Audit team which is helping with the high level of workload involved in following up multiple supply routes and getting test certificates approved. Delivery system for food and essential hygiene items has been set up using our school meals provider Chartwells/Compass Group and another local supplier delivering to over a 1,000 people each week who are vulnerable or shielded in our local communities.
  - iii. **Business Ops** – Responded at pace adapting and supporting staff with the transition to remote working. Revised Business continuity plans to adapt to the extreme conditions and successfully worked with Audit and corporate partners to verify prioritisation introducing streamlined processes and effective prioritisation of critical payments

ensuring vital services e.g. payroll have been maintained without interruption.

- iv. **HROD** – Pace and responsiveness in interpreting ‘5pm bulletin’ into practical advice for customers leveraging scale and expertise across the Partnership to share guidance and then applied on a local basis relevant to context. Applied expertise in interpretation of national and local guidance to fit with the needs and context of the Customer and successfully co-ordinated the redeployment process to identify volunteers to support PPE distribution.
- v. **Finance & Audit** - Grant funding support quickly put in place to help to provide clear guidance and support across the partnership. The Internal Audit and Counter Fraud Service has fundamentally revisited its approach to audit and assurance in response to Covid19. Recognising the importance of being flexible and supporting priority/front line services, the team have suspended all but the most essential previously planned work and instead commenced a programme of proactive advice, support and assurance to services across all the Orbis partners. In recognition that for virtually all services, key business processes have been adapted in response to COVID-19 and workarounds developed, Internal Audit work has focussed on advising on these changes and providing assurance that risks continue to be mitigated and appropriate controls are maintained. Finally, a comprehensive fraud risk assessment and response plan has been developed for all Orbis partners specifically in response to emerging COVID-19 related fraud risks, with these plans underpinned by additional use of data analytics to help identify potential frauds and provide assurance that key financial controls remain in place.
- vi. **Schools Traded Services** – Services to schools in ESCC took a revised approach to support the changing need of customers providing varied and much needed support during the buyback period which has assisted in securing £6.5m amid lockdown.
- vii. **Performance and Change Team** –Developed innovative virtual learning and discussion sessions for staff including the introduction of a new eLearning approach to continue to provide the ongoing focus on development for our staff.

## 22. Restart/Recovery Principles and Partnership Focus

- a. Orbis services have worked at pace to streamline, automate and adapt processes to enable remote working and to support customers.
- b. Using service expertise and industry best practice, workarounds have been found, new solutions developed, and planned introductions of new tools and tech brought forward and as part of our recovery principles we are keen to retain these new ways of working for the future.
- c. Works are underway to learn from this experience to develop improved models and capability to continue to enhance the operational infrastructure, customer experience and continue to provide the development opportunities for our people to make sure that they feel informed, supported and have the skills needed to succeed. An outline of some of the key initiatives being progressed noted below in line with the new Blueprint Business Plan.
- d. Customer

- i. Delivery model reviews underway for each service leveraging the learnings from the new ways of working alongside incorporating the Partner Councils individual recovery principles to ensure alignment and consistency where possible.
- ii. Introduction of a new Business Operations Helpdesk driving process optimisation and greater alignment across the teams including performance uplift and enabling a more consistent customer experience.
- iii. Commercial review continuing to refine and agree the principles and parameters for growth.
- iv. Expansion of self-service capability and chat functionality.
- e. Innovation
  - i. Modernisation Programmes promoting improved business practices, process efficiency and increased innovation.
  - ii. Continued focus on design and delivery of digital technology enablers across the Orbis partnership.
  - iii. Refreshed programme of works being developed for Robotic Process Automation driving reduced operating costs and increase throughput.
  - iv. ERP development works across the partnership continuing.
- f. People
  - i. Continuation of virtual and remote ways of working being assessed incorporating feedback from our staff to help formulate clear guidelines for the future.
  - ii. New e-Learning Strategy being developed and implemented.
  - iii. Implementation of the new Learning and Development hub – Orbis Academy.
  - iv. Leadership development programmes ongoing.
  - v. New Partnership Apprenticeship programme being introduced.
  - vi. Refreshed focus on retention and recruitment strategies being developed.

### What Happens Next?

23. The reporting will evolve and develop as business needs and requirements change. Ongoing works will continue to enhance data sets enabling insightful and valuable analysis to be provided.

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#### Contact Officer:

Nikki Neal – Head of Strategy, Performance and Change

#### Consulted:

Kevin Foster – Chief Operating Officer (ESCC)  
Leigh Whitehouse – Executive Director of Resources (SCC)  
Nigel Manvell – Deputy Chief Finance Officer (BHCC)

#### Annexes:

Annexe 1 - JMB Highlight Report  
Annex 2 - Orbis Partnership Blueprint

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