

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet
Date: 28 February 2023
Subject: Internal Resources Portfolio
Portfolio Holder: Cllr Sam Kane

Recommending:

That the report of the Internal Resources Portfolio Holder be noted.

People Team

People Strategy 2020 – 2022

Engagement and Wellbeing Project

Upgraded Wellbeing Hub

- Employees have access, via the intranet, to a Wellbeing Hub making available resources for all aspects of their wellbeing. On 21 December 2022 officers launched a new look Wellbeing Hub on the intranet just as the cold weather set in, the cost-of-living crisis continues, and the changes that are happening across the organisation.
- The new site was developed taking all these factors into consideration, and in doing so we have improved the way our employees access our wellbeing resources and information. The new solution provides:
 - One place to find all information and resources
 - An easily navigated format, the information is categorised for easy navigation
 - A solution which gives administrators anonymised analytics
 - A simple and easy solution for administrators to update the information/resources

The new platform provides a digital, data-led, engaging alternative to the intranet page and PDF format. The improved hub combines both the original Wellbeing Hub, financial, and winter wellbeing resources and is now split into six sections for ease of use

- Mental Wellbeing - highlighting resources like the Employee Assistance Programme from Health Assured, our Mental Health First Aiders and more.
- Physical Wellbeing – highlighting resources like the Perkbox Wellness Hub, Cycle to work scheme, menopause resources and more.
- Financial Wellbeing – highlighting resources like the Financial Wellbeing Skill Pill Learning Pathway on Litmos, the Cost-of-Living Survival Kit from Money Saving Expert and more.

- Winter Wellbeing – highlighting resources like How to look after your mental health at Christmas, S.A.D – What it is and how to beat it and more.
- Family Support – highlighting resources for fathers, Relate’s resources for relationship problems and more.
- Work Life Balance – highlighting resources from podcasts, videos, and articles about managing stress, understanding work-life balance and more.
- The new format allows us to change the content and adapt to the needs of our employees without needing to develop lengthy additional seasonal wellbeing documents.
- The platform also provides us with anonymised analytics, providing us with not only how many times the document has been accessed, but how many times a particular page or link has been clicked on, giving a date and time. Allowing our administrators to make data-led decisions and ensure the content provided to employees continues to be relevant. In return employees will receive a more intuitive, engaging experience which supports their overall wellbeing.
- We are actively encouraging employees to feedback to help us develop our new hub and enhance our wellbeing offering.

Upgraded Employee Intranet

- On 27 October 2022 the upgraded intranet site was launched in test to the whole organisation. Internal Communications received plenty of excellent feedback, all of which has been worked through to identify improvements and changes to the new intranet. Officers are working towards transitioning from the old intranet to the new by the end of February 2023.

Business Support

Local Land Charges (LLC), HMLR Project

- The Council are in the final stages of data cleansing in preparation for the HMLR migration. A recent data comparison exercise had an unexpected outcome, meaning a bit more work is required around our data than expected. HMLR are supporting the Council to get a resolution that has a minimal impact on the team’s turnaround times for searches.
- The Council will continue to be responsible for CON29 searches post migration and as part of the service review our fees and charges have been reviewed and increased to cover the basic operating cost of the team that carry out this work.

Projects

Accommodation – Commercialisation of our bookable spaces

- The Council are continuing to pursue the partnership with IWG and Epping Regus for the advertising and booking management of our Conference Suite and Council Chamber at the Civic Offices. The Solicitor for Epping Regus suggested some tweaks to the contract, which the Council’s Contracts and Procurement Team are working through.

Soft Facilities Management – Outsourcing our Concierge Service

- Following scrutiny at November's Stronger Council Committee meeting, Cabinet approved a report recommending the outsourcing of the Civic Office Concierge Service and the appointment of a provider following a procurement process.
- The service transfer date to the provider, PCS Group, is estimated to be 1st April 2023.

Contingency Planning

- Officers are working through Business Impact Analysis, exploring various scenarios, and developing standalone response plans as required. Dates are in the diary for manager training.

Democratic and Election Services

- Following on from the joint session held with the Elections Team at Broxbourne Borough Council in November to consider the requirements of the Elections Act 2022, a Member Briefing was held in January to inform Councillors of the main changes that will be implemented for the elections in 2023 and 2024. The assistance of Members was requested to support the communication of the changes to the wider public.
- The latest Members Coffee Morning was held on Wednesday 18 January 2023 and support was provided by Democratic Services Officers to Councillors who required assistance with accessing or using the Modern.Gov app.
- Members are reminded to report any IT issues in respect of accessing Committee agenda on the Modern.Gov app or accessing their Epping Forest Email addresses to the Member Services Team and/or the ICT Helpdesk for logging and resolution.

Insurance and Risk

- The Insurance Specialist is continuing to work with Fleet Management team and HR on revising our Driving at Work policy, Drink & Drugs policy and producing a Drivers Handbook to ensure the Council is compliant with its obligations under the Health & Safety at Work Act and Road Traffic Acts amongst other obligations. The final documents will be required approval by Exec Team and is expected to be completed by Q4 of 2022/2023.

Corporate Communications

Webcasting Update

- Microsoft Teams will replace Zoom for hybrid webcast meetings later this year. Members will be able to join meetings via the Council's licensed MS Teams app. Free MS Teams app and browser options are also available to external attendees such as objectors, applicants and parish councils at planning meetings.
- The move to MS Teams is part of the Council's wider savings. Further cost reductions have been identified in the Council's webcasting contract. From July, webcasting costs will be reduced by approximately 50 percent to £10,000 per year. Main webcasting commitments will be retained including the live streaming of

- Full Council
 - Cabinet
 - O&S
 - DDMC
 - Plans Sub Committees
- Mobile equipment used to webcast meetings from the conference suite during the pandemic will be returned to Public i, with the option of reinstatement if required later. Savings have also been identified by recording rather than live-streaming other meetings such as
 - Select Committees
 - Cabinet Committees
 - Audit and Governance
 - Licensing
 - Local Councils Liaison

You Tube

- Reducing the Public i archive period from 2 years to 6 months provides further savings. Upload to You Tube with auto-captions to aid accessibility, will make all live and recorded meetings available as basic videos indefinitely beyond the 6-month archive.

Audio quality enhancements – Council Chamber

- Taking account of budgetary constraints, Facilities, ICT, Planning and Corporate Communications have been working with the assistance of several councillors to develop affordable enhancements to the audio and visual quality in the council chamber.
- A new wifi-based hearing assistance system based on smartphone technology is due to replace the outdated and inadequate IR hearing system. A new Digital Signal Processor (DSP) has been commissioned to improve audio quality along with new speakers to enhance sound quality. Larger TV monitors are being installed to aid viewing of PowerPoint and planning presentations.

Reach and coverage

- Since the last update, Corporate Communications has continued to distribute a wide variety of service support and customer information via a range of platforms. Reach continued to expand.

Social Media – Followers 2022

Platform	July	December
Facebook	4469	4607
Instagram	2230	2340
LinkedIn	2650	2870
Twitter	9845	9961

Social Media – Average Reach 2022

Platform	July	December
Facebook	16,176	19,040
Instagram	1,790	2160

Average impressions per month

Platform	July	December
LinkedIn	9,732	10,795
Twitter	38,500	37,600

- Reach - The number of people who have been exposed to a post or advert. This doesn't necessarily mean that all these people have read the post; they could have scrolled past it. Reach indicates that the content appeared in the user's social feed at least once.
- Impressions - The number of times social media browsers have been showed your post. Impressions are different than reach as it doesn't count people who engage with your content, just those who are exposed to it.

EFDC News Items 2022

Platform	Up to July	Up to December
EFDC District Matters subscribers	94	103
EFDC Mailchimp subscribers	1,317	1,448
Media Releases	140	289

- Media releases are distributed through Mailchimp and published as news items to the website

EFDC website eppingforestdc.gov.uk 2022

Analytics	Up to July	Up to December
Visits	538,681	947,158
Page views	1,539,632	2,500,678
Unique visitors	484,684	867,476

- Visits - a series of page requests in no more than 30 minutes from the same uniquely identified visitor.
- Page views – the number of times a page has been viewed.
- Unique visitors – the total number of visitors to the website. (Some visitors may be counted more than once if they use multiple browsers or devices)

Most popular pages

- Planning search 21.9%
- Council Tax portal 11.75%
- Homepage 5.18%
- Check your bin collection 2.1%
- Planning and Building Control 0.7%

Webcasts January to December 2022

- 116 webcasts
- 181 hours
- 2,911 live views
- 12,224 archive views*
- 37 shares
- 17,715 views of all our webcasts during the calendar year

Top 10 watched webcasts:

Webcast title	Live date	All views	Live views	Archive views
Council	26/05/22	569	64	505
Plans East	13/07/22	489	39	450
Licensing	19/04/22	320	33	287
Plans South	05/01/22	307	50	257
Plans East	06/04/22	290	55	235
Cabinet	07/11/22	288	52	236
DDMC	21/09/22	272	58	214
Cabinet	18/07/22	264	19	245
Plans East	09/03/22	251	51	200
Council	11/10/22	249	27	222

Major items

- Corporate Communications promotes a wide range of community, health and wellbeing projects. Many of these projects originate within CCW and other in-house services such as Countrycare. Many also involve inhouse teams such as Community Safety working with external partners such as Essex Police, Essex Fire and Rescue, Social Services and local health services.
- Community Hub marketing took place across a range of council and partner platforms, supported by the in-house production of a series of animation videos designed for social media. This was followed up with specific Warm Places promotion as the cost-of-living crisis deepened with the increase in fuel prices and cold weather.
- The Council highlighted the work of other organisations to residents including changes to wards and constituencies by the Boundary Commission and the release of local Census 2021 data by the Office of National Statistics. Awareness raising drew Epping Forest residents' attention to the Mayor of London's TFL ULEZ (Ultra-Low Emission Zone) consultation proposals.

- Corporate Communications worked in partnership with planning services colleagues and the Planning Inspectorate to provide the website platform and publicity to deliver the Local Plan Main Modification consultation. The team also supported the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town Partnership.
- The team continued to share and amplify EFDC and wider Essex information and support to Ukrainian refugees and sponsor families.
- In September the Chairman of Council in conjunction with Corporate Communications led the district's response to the death of Her Majesty the Queen.
- The publication of the early versions of the draft budget involved coordinated internal and external communications concerning potential reductions in staffing.
- Difficulties with the household waste and recycling service led to extensive online website and social media engagement, exacerbated by the severe weather in early December.
- Extensive communications outlined the Council's opposition to the use of unsuitable local hotels by the Home Office for asylum seekers.
- The council worked in partnership with Qualis to highlight the start of key developments in Epping, including the multi-storey Cottis Lane carpark.
- Behind the scenes, Corporate Communications began the development of new transactional webpages on the Local Gov Drupal content management system (CMS). Initial designs were presented to a residents focus group. Positive feedback was received. Further customer focus groups will be convened to check progress as Drupal is developed.

Corporate Communications received further Drupal CMS technical training. This follows work to implement changes to the existing Wordpress based website, including enhancements and improvements to the search and navigation functions.

Membership of the LocalGov Drupal cooperative continues to increase. EFDC has access to the shared experience and expertise of more than 34 other councils in the development of its new content. Essex County Council, and Colchester City Council are also part of the LocalGov Drupal partnership while Castlepoint Borough Council has expressed interest. Local meetings have been held to explore ways in which Essex councils can provide extra support and cooperation with each other.

- The Senior Leadership Team approved a new website content strategy. Key elements include content design for smartphone, accessibility, plain English, consistent branding, and Search Engine Optimisation to drive further search and navigation improvements.
- Looking forward, Corporate Communications will continue to develop LocalGov Drupal. All residents will be receiving updates on the introduction of Voter ID for the local elections, and the revised 1-day RideLondon event in May. Further updates will be issued in conjunction with Qualis as developments in Epping, Loughton and Waltham Abbey progress.

Parking

- **Electric Vehicle (EV) Chargers**

EFDC have entered into a lease agreement with InstaVolt for 4 x rapid EV charging stations in Basons Lane car park, Ongar. Planning Permission for the EV charging stations was granted on 16th January 2023. Installation will start on Monday 13th February.

InstaVolt is exploring the viability of rapid EV charging stations in Cornmill car park, Waltham Abbey, and Burton Road car park, Debden with the Distribution Network Operator (UK Power Networks). These proposals are subject to the availability of infrastructure. The chargers will be installed at no cost to the Council and generate income to the Council through ground rent and profit share.

- **Car Parking Income**

Car parking occupancy rates have reached approximately 90% of pre-pandemic parking occupancy levels overall. Short stay car parks have reached pre-pandemic income and occupancy levels; however, occupancy levels have not reached pre-pandemic levels in long-stay car parks. This is assumed to be due to the prevalence of working from home post-pandemic.

The new car parking tariffs introduced in April 2022 has been successful in generating additional income to the Council and is projected to generate an annual increase of approximately £150,000 in parking fees and charges. The introduction of permits in Cornmill car park, Waltham Abbey and Oakwood Hill East car park, Debden is also generating additional income to the Council.

ICT

Service Management

The ICT service desk team has taken the initiative to get behind some repeating customer issues. This has now been reflected in the reduced trend of calls and tickets being raised. Ticket management continues to significantly improve.

KPI's – SLA Metrics & Analysis for Year 2022

Tickets Raised	Outstanding	On Hold	Resolved	Within SLA	% Within SLA	Outside SLA	% Outside SLA
8363	25	12	8338	8347	99%	16	1%

January has highlighted an increase of 48 tickets being raised for Microsoft Outlook/Exchange. This reflects the widespread national outage of Microsoft Outlook and MS Teams.

Customer satisfaction 1 January - 31 December 2022 (248 respondents)

Satisfaction Level	Ticket Handling	Customer service	Technical skill	Time taken
Very satisfied	93.15%	95.97%	94.76%	91.94%
Satisfied	6.05%	3.23%	4.44%	6.45%
Dissatisfied	0.40%	0.40%	0.00%	1.21%
Very Dissatisfied	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
(blank) No response	0.40%	0.40%	0.81%	0.40%
Total	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

Customer comments on service provided:

- Great service from a friendly colleague
- The ticket was resolved within minutes
- Issue was resolved very promptly and explained to me so that I can sort this out again if it reoccurs
- Always appreciate the help given to me and solutions given. Thanks
- Staff dealt with a time-consuming matter with short notice and completed perfectly providing support every step of the way
- The IT staff worked very hard to find the solution that wasn't readily available and had to work around the issues.

Projects – Business Applications and Infrastructure

Strategy

The ICT strategy is being updated in line with the need to find efficiency savings in the service and across the business to ensure that resources are focussed upon the areas of greatest impact. A series of infrastructure and network projects are being planned to underpin the overall move to the cloud.

ICT is working as an enabler within the Digital Strategy to facilitate project delivery.

Projects - Business Applications and Infrastructure

In line with the ICT Strategy and to provide better resilience, the 'on-premises' Revenues and Benefits application was successfully moved to Capita's cloud solution in October 2022.

Enhancements to Rendezvous the internal booking application, have made it easier for EFDC colleagues to book desks, meeting rooms and car parking bays.

A Chatbot was introduced onto the corporate EFDC website for an 8-week free trial. This digital solution was able to supply information to residents and support the contact centre with refuse and waste enquires. Chatbot was also able to provide robust data to analyse and prove its success in the 8-week trial.

Infrastructure Projects include:

1. A new SAN (Storage Area Network) solution was successfully implemented to replace an old slow server
2. Extra resilience to the council's corporate DR (Disaster Recovery) solution
3. Supporting business on closing the Broadway Office
4. Implementation of the Azure project has commenced

Resourcing

Existing colleagues have been asked to step-up as a financial saving, following the departure of the ICT Infrastructure and Security Team Manager and the ICT Asset Management Officer in January 2023.

Solace is managing the recruitment of the joint ICT & Transformation Service Director. This is a shared role between EFDC and Colchester City Council. Solace has extensive experience

in helping public sector organisations to recruit the highest calibre of candidates. The responsibility for the joint leadership role, will include high-quality Transformation services, ICT, PMO (Project Management Office) and Change.

Corporate Projects

The Project Management Office (PMO) provides governance and project management resources.

The 'project portfolio' currently consists of 28 projects, which are either in 'scoping and design' or 'in delivery'. Of these, 28 a number are categorised as priority projects, which are strategically aligned to EFDC's Corporate Objectives. Priority projects are also reported on a quarterly basis through Overview and Scrutiny.

The Priority Projects in progress include:

- Financial ICT Systems Replacement
- Housing & Asset Management System
- Epping Leisure Centre (Contract Agreement & Implementation)
- Waste Management Contract
- Transfer Services to Qualis
- North Weald Master Planning/Enterprise Zone
- Local Plan
- M3 PP Proposal
- People Programme
- Green Agenda Programme

The PMO has worked extensively to review and align projects to EFDC's Corporate Objectives so that time, effort, and money can be directed and supported on the right projects. Steering Groups have re-focused to support the roles of the key stakeholders involved. There is still work to be undertaken, as we continue to mature the PMO function.

Project Delivery has continued at pace and exciting opportunities are being considered for future approaches to joined up working with other Local Authorities.

The PMO is currently mapping out a process and timeline to complete a full health check/deep dive on all Priority Projects to identify any gaps, re-align where appropriate and identify opportunities for support. This is a big task but will provide added value to understand our portfolio in much greater depth.

Work is close to nearing completion on the composition of a full portfolio milestone plan. This plan will be used to support future Steering Groups so that as an organisation we can better understand our pinch points in delivery. There is also an opportunity to use this information in other governance routes.

Service Planning for the 23/24 financial year is underway for all Service Areas. This will allow Service Areas the opportunity to identify the projects they wish to progress. The PMO has worked to revise the Service Planning Process using lessons learnt from previous years as well as understanding current challenges in order to improve how we as an organisation complete this process. The revised process has a stronger focus on objectives, finance, resource, priority and importantly benefits.

PMO is moving forward with a procurement for licenses for TeamHood which will give us a tool to allow us to start to use a Kan Ban Board System which in turn will support our appetite

for a greater level of agile project delivery within the organisation. We are also in addition to this eagerly awaiting the outcome of a joint bid with Haringey Council for funding to implement a system called Monday.com. If successful, this will have a huge impact on EFDC and how we manage our portfolio and processes that support project management delivery.