# Report to the Council

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| **Committee:** | **Cabinet** | **Date:** | **27 September 2016** |

**Subject:**      **Technology and Support Services**

**Portfolio Holder:**      **Councillor A Lion**

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**Recommending:**

**That the report of the Technology and Support Services Portfolio Holder be noted.**

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## Support Services

### HR/Payroll IT System – Implementation

I am pleased to report that work continues on the HR and Payroll ICT project in partnership with Braintree and Colchester Councils. Various HR and Payroll workshops have taken place to decide protocols, carry out training and agree system structures. As Members may remember an Implementation Governance Board has been established to manage the project robustly and this continues to work effectively.  The planned go live date for Payroll remains December 2016.

### Apprenticeship Levy

Members may be aware, as part of the last Autumn Statement, the Government introduced an Apprenticeship Levy for employers with a pay bill in excess of £3m per annum.  The Levy will come into effect in May 2017 and is set at 0.5% of our pay bill; therefore the Council will pay approximately £70,000, based on a pay bill of £16.92m.

The Levy will be paid to the Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs on a monthly basis, who in turn will credit us back the money to fund training for our apprentices.  The Council will continue to pay salaries separately.

In addition the Enterprise Act 2016 creates a target for the number of apprentices the Council must employ during a 'report period'.  We are waiting for further guidance as to what a report period is and what the targets will be, however the current proposals are approximately 2.3% of an employer's headcount in a 12 month period.  For the Council this will mean 15/16 apprentices compared with our current cohort of 7 apprentices.

Members will know that the Council already operates a very successful apprenticeship scheme and these changes will enhance our arrangements in supporting the young people of our district with employment opportunities.

## Facilities

The Facilities Management staff have nearly completed the 5 year maintenance review and plan for all of the Council's operational and commercial properties. This has involved visiting and assessing all buildings and using the information acquired to forecast the costs involved in maintaining the buildings and infrastructure at an appropriate level to meet regulatory obligations.  A report setting out the work necessary will come to Cabinet in November.

## Technology

The compliance required for flying our drones is now in its penultimate stage of approval with the Civil Aviation Authority. Once the flying manual receives its certification, the final stage is for our pilots to pass a flying assessment and then we can legally begin using the drones. Full compliance is anticipated by the end October.

The new ICT helpdesk is now fully commissioned and operational. The new self-service and FAQ elements will greatly improve the user experience. The system also includes a detailed asset register which will assist in the management of ICT hardware which is especially important given the increased numbers of mobile devices.

The GOOD product, which we use for all of our email and calendar operations on mobile devices, has recently been acquired by Blackberry. A new improved version of the application has been released and the rollout to staff and Members has been successfully completed.

The mobile phone contract has been awarded to O2, who offered reduced costs, transparent tariff and best local area coverage.

The new Business Support Analyst responsible for assisting in channel shift has been appointed. The working brief concentrates mainly on the development of self-service forms and the website and will work very closely with the newly appointed Head of Customer Services.

### Printer Migration Project

The Multi-Functional Device (MFD) contract has been awarded to Xerox. These devices will save £90,000 for the 5 year life of the contract, reducing individual printers, improving efficiency and saving paper. 26 MFD's are already on site awaiting configuration. The cabling required to connect to the local area network will begin during September to allow the start of the rollout during October.

### Superfast Broadband High Speed Internet

The rollout of the Rural Challenge project ultrafast network by Gigaclear continues. As at mid-August over 117km of fibre network had been built with the project reaching a significant milestone when it exceeded the first thousand properties to be provided with a live connection point at the edge of their property. In total over 1,300 properties had live connection pots installed. A total of five fibre cabinets were live throughout the project area with four of the five areas served approaching completion of the network build.

A Broadband Business Breakfast was held on 13 September at Mulberry House, High Ongar. This event featured a number of industry speakers presenting their ideas on how businesses can get the most out of the digital opportunities created by the installation of ultrafast and superfast broadband networks, a number of Epping Forest businesses from a wide range of industry sectors  signed up to attend.

### 'Smart Places' Initiative

The Superfast Broadband programme, continues to roll out across the District, with specific investment in fibre infrastructure to our rural areas to the east. With the infrastructure now being put in place there is a shift to look at how best the network can be used both by residents and ourselves as a local authority.

With this in mind Members and Officers were invited to the BT research facility in Ipswich to explore opportunities for digital technology to deliver better applications and services to support the local community, the local economy and enable significant cost savings in service delivery.

I recently presented the Epping Forest Experience of the roll out of The Gigaclear service to our rural communities to the Superfast Essex Steering Board and took the opportunity to introduce the concept of the Epping Forest DC area being a 'Smart Place' as part of the Smart Cities initiative. This was accepted and the potential to be part of the Smart Essex initiative proposed.

Ongoing dialogue with the London Stansted Cambridge Consortium (LSCC) which hosted a major Smart Cities event in Cambridge, with major service providers and companies developing services in west Essex has resulted in a proposal to host a 'Smart Places' event in the district. The event which will be held in December in partnership with the LSCC will bring together business and councils to see what lessons from the Smart Cities initiative can be extended to a more mixed urban/rural environment and how cross border working can enable and support business growth.