

# **Report to the Council**

**Committee:** Cabinet

**Date:** 24 April 2018

**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**

**People Strategy – Developing the Organisation**

**Common Operating Model**

The Council appointed a Business Support Manager in January 2018 to take forward the review of all administration teams and functions across the Council with the aim of aligning with the Council's Common Operating Model, removing duplication, streamlining processes and bringing the resources together into one team to support the organisation.

Since January 2018 the Business Support Manager has reviewed 37 of 82 job roles resulting in 28 job roles being identified as Business Support and the other 9 roles split between Customer Service or Technical as per the Common Operating Model.

The Resources Directorate Business Processing and Support Teams and one of the two Neighbourhood Support teams have merged to build the first element of the Corporate Business Support Team. The second Neighbourhood Support Team is due to join the Corporate team by mid-April.

Process mapping for tasks undertaken by the teams mentioned above started mid-March, improvements are already being identified and changes are being implemented.

The areas identified to review throughout the project are tasks and processes, teams' targets and performance, job descriptions (to create flexibility), work patterns and hours (to ensure they still suit the business), the overall team structure and staff training to up skill (to create flexibility).

This month the Head of Customer Services and the Business Support Manager will start process mapping and reviewing tasks in the Planning Development.

**Implementing iTrent**

I am pleased to inform members that the annual leave pilot using iTrent was successful and consequently the electronic requesting and recording of annual leave is now "live" for all staff.

## **People Strategy - Developing Skills of the Workforce**

### **Skills Audit**

The People Team and ICT have worked together to develop an electronic survey which will ask staff to record their qualifications. The information will assist in the development of staff and management training programmes to fit the needs of the new organisational roles, skills and structure.

As part of the skills audit there will be specific questions on IT training needs and gaps. This information will be used by ICT to plan a comprehensive training programme which supports appropriate digital skills development for staff. This is an area where it has been identified there is an urgent need to update staff skills.

## **People Strategy – Resourcing the Council**

### **Employee Probation Policy**

The People Team have developed an Employee Probation Policy which will be effective from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2018 whereby all newly appointed employees will be subject to a 6 month probation period.

The probation period follows a set programme which includes;

- Induction in the first 4 weeks of employment to help the new employee with orientation, getting to know their work colleagues and familiarisation with key policies and procedures
- Set formal reviews at 1, 3, 5 and 6 months to ensure that objectives are set, understood and performance meets the required standards
- Regular one to one meetings to support the new employee to settle in, provide praise/address issues and to meet the required standards of performance.

The probation process allows early release in the first 4 weeks where there are clear indications that the new employee is not suitable for the role appointed to. Where difficulties arise during probation it is intended that the formal reviews will give the new employee every opportunity to fully understand what is required of them to meet the required standards. With the formal reviews and one to ones providing support to the new employee during the first 6 months of employment it is expected that the majority will successfully complete their probation period and be confirmed in post. In exceptional circumstances the probation period may be allowed for up to a maximum of 3 months.

## **People Strategy – Pay and Benefits**

### **Review**

The Council's Transformation Programme Board has recently agreed a Project Initiation Document for a fundamental review to take place of the organisation's job evaluation (JE) processes, pay model and its Collective Agreements and Terms and Conditions.

To enable the Council take forward a challenging agenda it needs to ensure pay, JE Scheme, terms & conditions and benefit arrangements will attract, engage and retain a suitable workforce.

The review will look at the current pay, pay structures, collective agreements, terms and conditions, benefits and job evaluation arrangements.

A small team of EFDC staff will form a Negotiation Board to discuss proposals with the Trade Unions and to agree a Joint Collective Agreement. The Transformation Programme Board will provide direction and any proposals will be agreed by Cabinet and Council as necessary.

### **Mental Health Awareness Week 14<sup>th</sup> May 2018**

Mental Health Awareness Week is organised by the Mental Health Foundation and this year it focuses on managing stress.

The Council's cohort of apprentices have designed a plan to communicate Mental Health Week and the current support available to staff. They will use posters, the intranet, training sessions and District Lines to promote ideas about what can help with stress. To highlight the Week 'Supporting Personal Resilience' sessions have been arranged which have already been fully booked.

### **Facilities**

The Facilities Management team has been very busy finishing off works to complete year 1 of the 5 year planned maintenance programme.

Jetting of landlord's foul and surface water drainage systems at numerous EFDC shopping parades, industrial estates and General Improvement Areas has been completed.

Various health and safety improvement works have been completed at Townmead depot. Fencing and wall strengthening works have been undertaken and a fire alarm detection and warning system has been installed in the occupied gatehouse. A simple fire alarm warning system is also now in place around the yard areas. The old redundant water tank and housing has also been removed from the roof of Building 21.

At the museum, the first floor windows in front gallery and rear office areas have been overhauled and balancers to each sash replaced.

The pedestrian walkway adjacent shop 42 The Broadway, Loughton has been refurbished with a new coating to the floor and walls and ceiling have been redecorated.

The Limes Centre in Chigwell has been redecorated externally and a mansafe system installed on the roof to facilitate safe working at height when undertaking future maintenance works.

Essex Lift Services Ltd has been appointed to refurbish the nine passenger lifts on the Limes Farm Housing Estate in Chigwell. Survey and design work for the first lift is complete and works are due to start on 9th April.

### **Legal**

We have sadly said goodbye to Ruth Rose, the Council's Senior Lawyer, who has retired. She will be missed not only for her legal expertise but for the support that she readily gave to all in legal and throughout the Council.

The Council has appointed Elaine Bell, who is a solicitor on a temporary basis to undertake the planning work including providing support to the Local Plan. We wish her well.

Congratulations to Ioanna Tsiachri, Property Executive, who has qualified as a fellow of the Chartered Institute of Legal Executives.

## **Legal and Corporate Fraud**

Among the cases that went to court this March, was the prosecution of Fadimana Altinsoy for four offences of Housing Fraud. The basis of the prosecution was that when applying for Council housing in 2003 Ms. Altinsoy had failed to declare her ownership of two properties jointly owned by herself and other relatives in Forest Gate London E7 and Grays in Essex. She was granted a tenancy of a property in Copperfield Chigwell Essex on 22nd January 2007 and the following day she completed a further Housing Application form seeking a move from a flat to a house and again failing to state that she jointly owned other properties. Had the Council been aware of her ownerships, she would not have been given the tenancy of the property at Copperfield Chigwell.

On 18th June 2010 Ms Altinsoy applied to the Council for a grant to assist her in purchasing a private property and again failed to reveal that she had an interest in two other properties. Epping Forest District Council gave Ms Altinsoy a grant of £28,000 which she used to purchase a property in Basildon Essex on 24 June 2011. However, not having been entitled to the grant of the tenancy of the property in Copperfield Chigwell, she was not therefore entitled to have received the grant.

This case was heard at the Chelmsford Crown Court. She pleaded guilty on the first day of the hearing and agreed to pay the sum of £28,000 back to the Council together with its prosecution costs of £12,500 before 5th March 2018. At a later sentence hearing Ms Altinsoy was sentenced to 2 years imprisonment suspended for 2 years together with a requirement to carry out 200 hours unpaid work with a probation supervision order for 12 months.

## **Technology**

ICT have successfully recruited to the two new posts created by the Technology Strategy, (Technology Support Officer (eForms & CRM) and Technology Support Officer (Project Management), we now have one resultant vacancy to fill - recruitment to which is in progress. This additional capacity will allow further development of our online form and Customer Relationship Management System, and to further enhance the way we manage projects within the Technology Strategy Programme

In terms of the Technology Strategy, a number of projects have been reprioritised based on the changes to the timeline for the accommodation strategy, we have however proceeded with the large scale laptop procurement, and the tendering exercise is now complete. We are proceeding with this project to enable flexible working so the necessary technical and cultural changes can be embedded ahead of the accommodation changes, and also because we have been managing our hardware procurement based upon this exercise, and failure to complete the tender would mean that we would still need to procure a larger quantity of laptops to meet normal business need, the process of briefing staff on this rollout has now begun. The Strategy progress will be reported to the next Resources Select Committee. Other key projects from the Strategy that are already in progress include the Security Review which will inform a number of other projects over the coming year, and ensure that our ICT security is proportionate and relevant.

The Gazetteer team have been working on the implementation of the new Corporate Gazetteer system, as well as ensuring our Gazetteer data is updated to meet changes in national requirements. The GIS team has carried out a number of UAV flights, and has otherwise been focusing on developing corporate capacity for GIS by delivery of training and

preparations for significant system upgrade this year which will improve resilience of this key system

The CRM/eForms team have provided a number of solutions to the business around mobile working and forms, a complete Mobile Working solution is now under test in the Neighbourhoods team, and the CRM system has been handed over for initial go-live by the customer team. Online form development continues, and a number of new external forms have been published in this period, and development of further forms continues as does enhancement of existing forms by the addition of integration to business systems.

The Mobile Working team assumed responsibility for the rollout of the Sky Guard lone worker system, and have largely completed this large task. They are now working with the eForms team to develop a new process for the issue of mobile devices ahead of the laptop rollout. We are also working on remote management tools and mobile device management, again ahead of the laptop rollout.

Our Business Analysts have been working on the preparatory work for three major system upgrades that will take place during this coming year, an upgrade to our Document Management System (Information@work), and to our Planning/Building Control and Environmental systems. These upgrades improve the customer facing offering significantly, and also will make these three key applications available to staff on mobile devices more readily. We have also been engaged in the work to enable the rollout of Office 365, including the deployment of Sharepoint to replace our corporate intranet. The team has also been supporting the business in the evaluation of a new Corporate Debtors system, further rollouts of Document Management and significant work around PCI-DSS security compliance for payments systems. We have also developed in house a solution to automatically import emails into our Document Management system, simplifying workflows in the business.

The Service desk team has now extended their operational hours in line with the Strategy, they are now available 8-6 each weekday. An ongoing internal customer feedback system has also been put into place to enable ongoing service improvement. As part of the development of the Service Desk all three recent appointees to the team have successfully completed their required initial external training. Our support arrangements have been further enhanced by the implementation of the agreed extension of on call arrangement to cover GIS and eForms to ensure our customer facing systems have the level of support required. The team has also delivered the pilot batch of 20 laptops to the Council, and also rebuilt 15 laptops for reallocation to VAEF, as well as supporting office moves on a number of sites.

The Networking Team is liaising closely with the Head of Customer Service, Council Tax and Benefits to reconfigure the telephony system to provide a more efficient experience. A survey of the Council's wireless environment is currently under way using a Fluke Network Management tool. This will give a full view of wireless at the Council Offices and will highlight any black-spots or channel interference.

Citrix Unified Gateway is installed and configured to allow for secure connection from the Internet to the Council's Citrix environment. Work is under way to configure this Internet facing appliance so that only authorised devices can connect to EFDC resources and security is sufficient to give best possible protection from undesirable connection requests. The Council's virtual server environment is currently being upgraded from v5.5 to v6.5 giving more management options and better performance.

The Council's vpn connectivity is currently being upgraded. This allows for a more flexible and manageable environment with improved logging capability and the ability to tie down

connectivity to authorised devices only. This is not only required for the Council's compliance certification but is also needed for remaining legally compliant with software licensing.

External resource has been booked to carry out a thorough check and review of the Council's Security environment. Issues and recommendations for improvements in the report will be considered and possibly implemented.

### **Superfast Broadband High Speed Internet**

As at March 2018 the network build had reached just over 4100 premises passed as it closes in on completion. A number of properties around the intervention area remain to be built as and when wayleave negotiations and some fault finding are completed. The most significant number to be completed are in the Hastingwood cabinet area as negotiations to facilitate Gigaclear to build part of its network across North Weald Airfield continue. It is still hoped that all remaining properties will be reached by the end of April 2018.

A report has been submitted to Cabinet 10 April 2018 seeking the utilisation of the existing capital provision of £350,000 for Phase 4 of the Superfast Essex broadband rollout which is match funded by contributions from BDUK and with an additional contribution from Essex County Council. A competitive procurement process has been undertaken by Essex County Council to commission a suitable provider to deliver additional broadband coverage in Epping Forest District. This competitive process has now been completed and the preferred bidder has been selected. Essex County Council is therefore seeking, prior to formalisation of the contract award, a written agreement with the Council to commit the additional funding of £350,000 in full. The Cabinet report is therefore seeking approval that such a written agreement may be entered into.

### **Digital Innovation Programme**

Having successfully submitted an application in November to the LGA / Design Council 'Design in the Public Sector' programme, an Economic Development Officer as part of a team that includes Princess Alexandra Hospital, Essex Partnership University Trust and West Essex CCG, is now working closely with the LGA and Design Council to deploy the latest design tools and approaches to service redesign to enable residents to remain at home with ongoing medical conditions rather than in the emergency department of the local hospital. The team has already received positive feedback on its efforts to date which have seen members accompany an ambulance crew on a day of emergency calls as well as observing and interviewing visitors to the A&E department of Princess Alexandra Hospital. The training programme is due to be completed by May 2018 although it is anticipated that the project will continue to be developed beyond that date and the skills acquired used in future projects.

The third Smart Places Seminar focusing on Digital Skills for future jobs took place on 09 February 2018 at Haileybury College in Broxbourne Borough. The event delivered a programme of excellent speakers from the private and public sectors. Almost 60 partners came together to share their thoughts on where we are currently and what needed to happen to make sure that there is a supply chain of digitally skilled people in place to enable business to grow, public services to develop and local people to get the opportunities to secure the great jobs that this would inevitably bring. An executive report of the event has been produced and circulated to all attendees. This report will be used to further raise awareness and understanding of the digital work programme.

ARUP consultants, one of the leading consultancies on digital innovation has been selected to work with the DIZ to develop a long term strategy for digital development in the area. The

aim of the strategy, which will be completed by July, is to give a clear picture of what digital infrastructure and approaches already exist across the geographies and sectors that make up the DIZ and to set out the key challenges facing an area like this to become a Beacon for digitally enabled service delivery and economic development. The project is jointly funded by 11 organisations including private sector, health sector, local authorities and economic development organisations.

Digital Catapult, working on behalf of central government, has approached the partnership to take part in its Things Connected innovation programme exploring the use of LPWAN (Low Powered Wide Area Network) technology to solve service challenges Epping Forest DC has agreed to coordinate a joint response as part of the DIZ programme. Funding has been identified and Digital Catapult has confirmed that the DIZ will be one of the four areas nationally that will take part in the next wave. Partners have suggested that the challenge could focus on parking and particularly disabled parking spaces to provide up-to-the minute information on free spaces.