

# ***Report to the Council***

**Committee:** Cabinet

**Date:** 21 December 2017

**Subject:** Technology and Support Services

**Portfolio Holder:** Councillor A Lion

---

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

---

## **Support Services**

### **Apprentices**

The new cohort of apprentices are already at their three month stage and had their first review in early December. Reports of their progress and performance in their placements is very good.

To assist with their development they taken on variety of projects including organising the Christmas Jumper Day on 15 December, a fundraising event for two charities; Save the Children and the Lymphoma Association supporting people affected by Lymphatic Cancer and their families. The apprentices will also be organising and leading the Epping College Careersfest in January 2018.

Officers are working with managers to recruit two higher level apprentices one in ICT and the other for a Corporate Management role. The recruitment will be aimed at local people, creating a great opportunity to learn enhanced skills. A possible start date is February 2018.

### **People Strategy**

Officers are introducing a People Strategy to ensure our workforce, organisation and processes are ready for the future. Included in the People Strategy is the introduction of a Common Operating Model (COM) as the basis for our revised management and workforce structures. As a part of the programme the Local Government Association (LGA) has been invited to review the management structure and has recently carried out interviews with 42 staff, at various levels of management, throughout the organisation, using their Decision Making Accountability Tool (DMA). Their review has concluded that for the size and complexity of our organisation, in some areas we have too many management layers, making decision and processes inefficient. Benchmarked against the Tool and other similar sized authorities. Recommendations have concluded the optimum organisation should have no more than four layers of management between frontline employees and the Chief Executive.

Further discussions with the LGA provide more detail on how we can implement the model to build an organisation which works for the Council. Work will start in the New Year on proposals for a Council wide structure following the principles of the Common Operating Model (COM), which will help to break down restrictive silos and improve efficiency.

Cabinet considered a report in early December to establish a provision to enable changes to the workforce to take place. A report on this Full Council Agenda will recommend the establishment of a series of selection panels to assist in the top level appoints. This will be

the first step in this significant change process. The setting up of these panels will be supported by The People Team (HR). A more detailed report by Head of Paid Service will be submitted to Cabinet in March 2018.

## **Facilities**

Health and safety improvement works are continuing at Townmead depot. Structural strengthening of the perimeter wall is underway and once completed it will enable the last section of new security fencing to be installed. Removal of a redundant water tank to part of the roof above the former canteen block is planned to begin soon.

External redecoration works have now been completed at the Control Tower at North Weald Airfield, the annex building to Hangar one and the shop at 48-50 The Street, High Ongar.

Service road repairs have been completed at Brooker Road Industrial Estate in Waltham Abbey and a number of small repairs have been completed in the Civic Offices car parks to remove surface hazards.

Roofing repairs of the Epping Forest Museum is progressing with controlled and safe removal of asbestos containing materials within the roof space over the Christmas closure period. Once complete, Facilities Building Surveyors will be able to progress the roof overhaul.

The refurbished boiler houses at Frank Bretton House, Jessop Court and Leonard Davis House are in the process of being linked into our Trend Building Management System. Colleagues in ICT are working with BT to install dedicated telephone lines to facilitate this project.

Tender documents have been returned for the refurbishment of nine passenger lifts on the Limes Farm Housing Estate in Chigwell. A tender analysis is currently being undertaken by a specialist consultant.

## **Internal Audit and the Corporate Fraud Team**

Internal Audit has revised and updated the Council's whistleblowing policy and procedure. Only minor changes have been made to the previous version (dated October 2014) and passed through both the Officer Corporate Governance Group and the Audit and Governance Committee. Staff will continue to be reminded about the Council's whistleblowing policy and procedure on a periodic basis in District Lines, (internal communication for staff) as well as through poster campaigns.

We have successfully completed a Proceeds of Crime investigation on behalf of Broxbourne Council. On 7 November 2017 at St Albans Crown Court awarded compensation amount to Broxbourne Council under the Proceeds of Crime Act. As a result, we will receive a percentage of the compensation award.

The joint working fraud service that were set up with the Brentwood Borough Council in September are continuing to work well, with several cases of social housing fraud being actively investigated as well as a number of positive results being currently obtained.

## **Legal**

On 31 August 2017 the Council obtained a Closure Order in respect of a council property in Sandford Avenue, Loughton, Essex as a result of Anti-Social Behaviour taking place at the

property, mainly by the tenant's visitors. On that occasion the council's tenant was allowed to continue living in the property but visitors were banned. However, the Anti-Social Behaviour continued and two persons were arrested for breaching the Order in October. One was not charged but the other was prosecuted for the breach by the Crown Prosecution Service and was given a 12 week custodial sentence by Magistrates at Chelmsford. The Council therefore reconsidered the position and on 9 November a further application was made for an alternative Closure Order, this time including the common areas serving the Sandford Court property and excluding the tenant from the property. This was granted by the Magistrates and using its powers under the Anti-Social Behaviour legislation, the property was secured against re-entry. However, this does not give the Council the immediate right to repossess the property. The tenant moved into another property in the locality but on 19 November he was issued with a written warning by the Police banning him from living at or visiting that property.

On 28 November 2017 the Council obtained a Possession Order in Edmonton County Court in respect of the Sandford Avenue property on mandatory grounds, namely that a Closure Order had been obtained. This was achieved through the collaborative working between officers in Legal, Housing and Safer Communities, the assistance of the Police and the understanding of the Courts.

## **Technology**

Following the adoption of the Technology Strategy for 2018-2023 by Cabinet on 9 November, ICT have been working on putting in place the Project and Programme governance arrangements that will ensure the smooth delivery of the Strategy. Work has also commenced on key work items that have been identified as critical prior to the full commencement of the Strategy Programme in 2018, the most critical of these being the full review of ICT Security restrictions and the future security model adopted for laptops. The rollout has also been completed of mobile working hardware to the Housing Assets and Repairs Teams to facilitate their move to flexible working ahead of their relocation.

All posts in the team are now filled, with the exception of the two new posts created in the Technology Strategy, which are in the process of being filled now to ensure that the positions are occupied for April 2018. Over the next few months ICT will be prioritising the work that will ensure the smooth start of the Strategy in April, including extending the Service Desk operational hours and enhancing our already effective on call arrangement for out of hours issues affecting critical systems.

To mark World Geographical Information System (GIS) Day, the Spatial Information Team hosted three sessions for staff covering a number of topics including the UAV, 3D mapping, data analysis and mobile working. Those that attended found the session useful and we have already arranged some follow up sessions with the Engineering, Drainage and Water Team to investigate how we can develop our solutions to aid them further.

Street naming and numbering responsibilities have now transferred over to the Gazetteer section of the Spatial Information Team and new online application methods have been implemented to streamline the process for residents and developers. Further improvements will follow with the implementation of the new gazetteer system.

We are preparing for the decommissioning of our old website forms by migrating them over to the new Firmstep system. This will give residents the opportunity to use self-service when dealing with Council Tax, the Customer Service Team and Building Control. This has involved new integrations with our document management solutions resulting in further efficiencies and saving of staff time.

Many of the staff have been providing a range of support to Planning; working on the Local Plan, helping prepare the mapping data for sharing with the public and developing a self-service form from the website to collect Regulation 19 response. Weekly meetings are being held with Planning and Public Relations to ensure solutions and processes are in place for publishing the Local Plan and handling the redaction and publication of response under Regulations 18 and 19.

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

The Rural Challenge Project continues to deliver ultrafast fibre broadband capability to rural houses and business premises throughout the North-East of the District. As at November 2017 the network build had reached just over 3,700 premises passed out of a total of 4,260. Building work to install the final two cabinet areas of the network in Hastingwood (North Weald) and Ongar has now commenced. Whilst discussions are ongoing to facilitate access for Gigaclear to build their network across North Weald Airfield, enabling that part of the network to be built more quickly, with a number of critical wayleave issues outstanding it is now unlikely that the full network will be completed by the end of December 2017.

### **Digital Innovation Zone (DIZ)**

Ten confirmed funding partners are contributing towards commissioning of a Digital Innovation Strategy and have established the Digital Innovation Zone Board. Initial membership comprised of this Council, Harlow Council, Uttlesford District Council, Broxbourne Council, East Herts District Council, Essex County Council, Princess Alexandra Hospital NHS Trust, West Essex Clinical Commissioning Group, London-Stansted-Cambridge Consortium and KAO Data and the latest meeting of the DIZ Board welcomed new membership from Epping Forest College, Superfast Essex and Rainbow Services of Harlow, representing the voluntary sector, as non-funding partners. It is also planning to invite a representative of the Higher Education Sector to join the board.

The Invitation to tender for the Digital Innovation Strategy, which will shape the work of the DIZ Board, has been agreed and recently issued by the Council. Submissions are requested by Wednesday 19 December and the process of assessing the tenders and receiving presentations from bidders will take place early in January 2018.