

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 29 September 2015

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

Following the Council's recent recruitment process for our new cohort of apprentices, I am pleased to report that we have recruited 7 Business Administration Apprentices and 1 Construction apprentice.

Two of the Business Administration apprentices will be funded by the Community Fund. Members may remember from my last report, that a number of Housing Associations on the Council's Preferred Supplier List are contributing to a Community Fund to finance some of the apprenticeship posts.

Eighteen young adults applied for a position and they attended a week long training programme before being shortlisted and interviewed.

The Council's 2013/14 Apprenticeship programme has now seen six out of the nine original young apprentices successfully gain permanent employment within the council in business administration or construction.

Jake Evans and Jake Davidson have recently achieved their Multi-Trade Construction qualifications have been employed as permanent multi-trade workers in the Communities, Housing Repairs Team.

The Business Administration apprentices have also been very successful, they have all passed their Business Administration Level 2 qualifications; Louis Walton is now working in Community Development; Cheznee Marquis is employed in Resources Admin Support, Sam Bevans is working in IT/ GIS Mapping and Alfie Claxton has achieved a permanent position in Council Tax.

Two of the cohort are now employed in other organisations.

Disability Two Ticks Symbol (√√)

I am also delighted to inform you that the Council has been awarded the Disability (Two Ticks) Symbol as a result of the re-accreditation process by the Department of Works and Pensions, Job Centre Plus.

The Symbol provides evidence that the Council encourages applications from disabled people and makes every effort when employees become disabled to ensure they stay in employment.

Technology

Flexible working through technology presentations

ICT have completed a series of detailed briefings with management teams from each directorate. These briefings covered available options for mobile/flexible working technology and focused on outcomes as opposed to technical options.

As a result of these briefings bids have been received from across all directorates for equipment from the allocated capital budget for this project. These bids will lead to improved efficiency from individual staff or whole teams and will also allow the testing of new capabilities in some cases to meet particular needs.

Facilities

Window Replacement

I am pleased to advise that this project has now been successfully completed with only minor snagging issues left to resolve. This project was important to maintain the integrity of the building and will also help reduce heating costs.

Roof and Solar Panel project

The scaffolding is now in place and work has commenced on the removal of the roof tiles on the Conder building. Work is also commencing to seal the roof on the front elevation of the main building. Once the roofing works are completed, the solar panels will be installed. This project is due to complete by the end of November, which will ensure that the higher energy tariff is received and the return of investment will remain at between 7-8 years.

Superfast Broadband High Speed Internet

Following the award of the Superfast Broadband (Phase 2b) Rural Challenge Project contract by Essex County Council to Gigaclear, preparatory work has been taking place ahead of the commencement of the delivery phase. A detailed delivery plan is being prepared by Gigaclear which will set out when and where the construction of the fibre network will begin and which locations can expect to be the first to be given access to the Ultrafast Broadband service. Even at this stage interest is high and 6 orders have already been received.

The first locations should be connected to the network by December 2015 with all 4,545 residential and business premises within the Rural Challenge Project intervention area being reached by the end of December 2016.

As the project rolls out through the intervention area Gigaclear will commence a rolling programme of parish publicity, communication and engagement to raise awareness of both the service that will be installed and the likelihood of any disruption in the build phase of the project. They will liaise closely with the parishes, at the same time aiming to ensure all disruption is kept to a minimum and a series of community events will take place to demonstrate and encourage take-up of the service that is being delivered.

Gigaclear and Superfast Essex, in conjunction with Epping Forest District Council Economic Development Officers, have already begun the parish engagement process with two events for parish, district and county council members for the affected areas, as well as nominated parish broadband champions. Both events were positively received.

The Rural Challenge Project sits alongside the ongoing Phase 1 and Phase 2a elements of the Superfast Broadband project which, in partnership with BT, are aiming to deliver 95% superfast broadband to the whole of Essex.

Delivery under these programmes is continuing and residents and businesses outside of the Rural Challenge Projects intervention area can also find out the latest on when these phases are likely to reach their locations by visiting the postcode checker map on the Superfast Essex website.