

# Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 18 February 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

### **Apprentice Programme Update**

Apprentice reviews have taken place and I am pleased to report they are all doing really well. We will be looking at moving the Apprentices to other placement within the Council, which will take place in March. As part of their individual development one of the Apprentices will have a placement at Higgins Homes in a part-time Marketing role for 3 months. When we are looking at placing Apprentices we look at several aspects, which include the person, their skills, interests and business needs.

### **Change100**

The Council will be participating in a scheme run by Leonard Cheshire Disability and Vanilla Ventures called Change 100. The scheme secures paid summer work placements for undergraduates and recent graduates with disabilities. We are hoping to provide a placement for one student with the recruitment campaign being undertaken by the scheme providers through January to April 2016, with the placement starting in June 2016.

As a Council our crucial role is in helping more disabled people in the District to progress their careers, whilst supporting the growth of local business and making the most of the disability talent pool.

### **Disability Confident**

In addition to the Change 100 scheme the Council is also signing up to Disability Confident which will support our existing efforts in attracting recruiting, retaining and developing disabled talent. We can tailor support for disabled people and making connections between employers, providers and disabled people in the local area, promoting good practices and innovation. Being a Disability Confident employer means that the Council will be recognised by the DWP as an employer who uses a range of government employment initiatives to employ disabled people.

## Facilities

### **Civic Offices - Roof Repairs and Solar Panels**

The PV Solar Panels have been fitted to the Civic Offices, covering approximately 302 square metres over two roofs. A total of 184 solar panels have been fitted to the roof to save the Council money on its energy bills and reduce carbon emissions. Press coverage was received last week from the Epping Forest Guardian, Council's website and social media. The life expectancy of the panels is 25 years and to pay back the initial costs will take just over 6 years. We are estimating an annual saving of £10,000 per annum something we can all be proud of and reducing the carbon footprint at the same time.

Upgrading of office lighting to LED is continuing in the ground floor rear extension of the Civic Offices and so far 6 offices have been completed. The work in the Accountancy office alone has reduced the number of lights from 37 lights at 72W each (a total of 2.66 kWh) to 27 lights at 9W each (a total of 0.24 kWh), which is approximately a 90% saving.

### **Office Moves**

The Economic Development office move has been completed with an approximate cost of £1,000. The Neighbourhood's Waste Management's team move from Langston Road Depot to the Civic Offices has now also been completed at a cost of £1,900. Office moves have to be justified and costs looked at very closely.

### **Technology**

#### **Northgate Mobile working solution - Planning System**

Following a recent demonstration of the Northgate Mobile working solution for Food Hygiene Inspections and Building Control, ICT approached the supplier (Northgate) regarding the potential for a similar solution for Development Management and Planning Enforcement. The solution is an upgrade to our existing back office system and is capable of transforming the way Development Management officers can work when out of the office, with or without mobile connectivity.

Northgate were planning to launch this product during this year, but required business input into the design process. ICT and Development Management are working in partnership to provide this business input. The system will enable officers to work on site and to remotely update back office systems, for Officer's with casework. It also offers the potential to change their work patterns as case load and visit details can be picked up from home, this will remove the need to attend the office to collect work first thing in the morning.

A joint ICT and Planning Development Management Project team approach means that the Development Management mobile working applications will be designed to ensure it meets the needs of the teams in that area. The application will be Android based and as part of the testing we will be trialling a range of different hardware solutions.

Funding for this project is in place, as it forms part of the Mobile/Flexible working project ICT have previously allocated funding. Budgetary costs estimates at this time will be around £1,000 per Officer for the software and between £200 and £500 per Officer for hardware. A range of hardware is required, to ensure that the needs of different teams to view different plans or documents are met. Costs will be firmed up as we move forward with our development into prototyping and testing.

This opportunity to simultaneously transform the way that Development Management works and being a key stakeholder in the design of the new application is a major opportunity for the Council. Once the Development Management project is complete or substantially underway, it is proposed to introduce the systems into the Building Control team.

#### **GIS & Gazetteer**

Following a report to Cabinet the Council has agreed to purchase an UAV (Unmanned Aerial Vehicle) under the 'Invest-to-Save' scheme. The report highlighted many areas where cost savings can be achieved through innovative technical solutions. Such items as various aerial surveys, 3D modelling and surveillance uses. There will be a saving to Officers time, along with potential for income generation by selling services, photos and videos.

GIS staff will fly the drone and will receive CAA approved training and accreditation. The Council will obtain CAA 'Permission for Aerial Work' approval. Technology in this field is evolving extremely quickly, with technology costs falling and benefits rising. Purchasing this

solution the Council has positioned itself to be at the forefront of these developments, taking advantage of the income generation and cost saving benefits this will bring.

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

The build phase of the Superfast Essex Rural Challenge Project continues to make progress in the Bobbingworth and Moreton areas of the district. A second fibre cabinet has been built just outside Fyfield and works to connect up this cabinet to the wider network have also begun. The first customer of the Gigaclear ultrafast network was connected and went live at the end of December, with the event being marked by a visit to Bobbingworth by Ed Vaizey, MP, Minister of State for Culture and the Digital Economy. The next cabinet planned for the network will be located in the Norton Heath area.

As part of the drive to generate more business take-up of the wider Superfast Essex offer, Superfast Essex will shortly be running a series of digital workshops, one of which 'How to stay ahead of competitors online' will be hosted in Ongar on the 3 March at Essex Technology & Innovation Centre. It is planned to promote these workshops and a digital toolkit, also developed by Superfast Essex, in the next edition of our 'One Business Briefing' magazine for businesses.

### **Transformation Programme**

The Head of Transformation has continued to work with colleagues across the Council to have a better understanding of 'what we do and who we are'.

Two workshops have taken place with the Leadership Team, in which they have considered the factors from the impacts on the services we deliver. Together with our strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats from change. These workshops provided a useful opportunity for Managers to share ideas about the things we would like to change to improve our services to customers.

At the Joint Cabinet and Management Board Meeting on Wednesday 27 January Members received a presentation on the emerging Transformation Programme. This included the initial findings on the proposed workstreams, including the Customer Contact Review report.

A formal report to Cabinet will follow in March.